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"YET:"
—
A MOTTO

FOR ALL TIMES & SEASONS.



600098661-

"YET:"

A MOTTO FOR ALL TIMES AND SEASONS.

BEING

A SELECTION OF TEXTS

IN WHICH

GOD'S PROMISES AND FAITH'S PLEA

ARE MOST ENCOURAGINGLY PRESENTED.

BY

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"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."—Is. xlix. 15.

"Then I said, I am cast out of Thy sight; yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple."—JONAH ii. 4.

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P R E F A C E.

THE Bible, despised though it be, has an adaptation to every case, a solace for every fear, a balm for every wound, and a power, persuasion, and preciousness that are perfectly supernatural.

One little word from this vast storehouse is presented to the reader in the following pages, which it is hoped, under God, may stir him up to hope and encouragement.

Doubtless the reader only too well knows that the world through which he is journeying towards vast Eternity, is a world of sin and sorrow. Under such circumstances the cheering word is necessary—something to counsel in perplexity, and to comfort in

trial. Where is it to be found? In the Bible! There the promises of a faithful, gracious, long-suffering God abound, and from this boundless and inexhaustible treasury, Faith is furnished with her pleas and her arguments at the footstool of mercy, and before the God of all grace.

That the reader may personally experience the truthfulness of these remarks, and that the contents of this little work may be instrumental in strengthening and stimulating him, is the earnest prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

ST. LUKE'S, BEDMINSTER,

January, 1871.

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A MOTTO FOR ALL TIMES AND
SEASONS.

“Can a woman's tender care
Cease toward the child she bare?
Yea, she may forgetful be,
YET will I remember thee.

“Lord, it is my oft complaint,
That my love is cold and faint!
YET I love Thee, and adore,
Oh, for grace to love Thee more.”

READER, there is a wondrous—we had nearly said a magic—power in the word of God, when that word is taken and applied by the Holy Ghost, the sacred Inditer thereof. When so applied it proves to adapt itself to the every state and condition in which a poor and needy creature can be found. There is not a want it cannot supply, nor a difficulty it cannot solve, nor a danger which it cannot compass. It suits all ages, all conditions, all men, whensoever and wheresoever and to whomsoever the Lord the Spirit condescendingly and graciously brings it home with His own divine and irresistible power. And there is, moreover, such a fulness and such a

preciousness when and where it is thus applied, that even a single word contains as it were volumes. Such word is fraught with wondrous instruction and richest consolation. In proof and as an example, we purpose to invite your attention to one little word of three letters merely; and sure we are that, if the Holy Ghost is pleased to shine upon it—to open it—to apply it—even that little word will be full of instruction and comfort. The word, therefore, which we propose for your consideration is

Y—E—T.

Now, in our comments upon it, we shall seek to show you its application to the varied states and ever-changing stages of the pilgrim, as

Scripture our he journeys through this vale of tears.

Text Book.

We shall endeavour to prove from Scripture—the only safe and certain rule—that it constitutes at once the *promise of God* and the *plea of faith*; and mark you, there is a blessed identity between both the one and the other. The promise or pledge of Jehovah is always the ground of faith's plea, the sweet privilege of which is to come before the Lord with the two-fold argument, "And Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good;" and "Do as Thou hast said."

Now, beloved, among the many Scripture portions in which this little but all-important word YET is presented to us, is that contained in Isaiah liii. 10, which, upwards of seven hundred years before His Incarnation, foreshadowed, in the great economy of Redemption,—

CHRIST CHASTENED OF JEHOVAH.

"YET it pleased the Lord to bruise Him: He hath put Him to grief."

The reader will perceive that we have not chosen the word in the same order as that in which it is laid down in the Bible. Our reason is **The Source and Spring of Salvation.** that we may at once come to the consideration of the root and foundation of all the rich and inconceivable mercy and blessing which fall to the portion of the Lord's people. All this is in Christ and from Christ. He is the Fountain, Spring, Source of salvation, and all the precious and distinguishing mercies flowing therefrom. Whilst salvation is a *gift*, it is likewise the fruit and effect of *purchase*. Christ is God the Father's gift to the Church, and the Church is the Father's gift to Christ. So it is written with respect to the former, "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles" (Isaiah xlii. 6); and, in regard to the latter, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). But then, as we have said, salvation was not only a gift, but a purchase. **The Redemption price.** The Church having fallen, had to be redeemed or bought back. Hence we read in 1 Peter i. 18, 19: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye

were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Christ, therefore, having, before the world was made, entered into covenant with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and engaged that, in the fulness of time, He would, as the Surety, Daysman, Redeemer of His Church, become at once its Substitute and Sacrifice; by His suretyship and substitution He took upon Himself all the tremendous consequences of the sin and transgression in which His Church was involved. What Judah said to Jacob

Judah a type of Christ in His suretyship. with respect to his younger brother Benjamin, "I will be surety for him: of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before

thee, then let me bear the blame for ever" (Gen. xliii. 9), Christ virtually said to the Father with regard to His Church. As Jacob looked to Judah in regard to Benjamin, so God the Father looked to Christ with respect to all the direful consequences of the Adam-fall transgression. But, as Jehovah could "by no means clear the guilty," or save poor sinners at the expense of His word, or the forfeiture of His character as the Holy, Just, and Good; so there must be a penalty paid. Such was paid in the person and by the offering once for all of Christ, according to the Scripture, "Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom" (Job xxxiii. 24). Now this brings out the "YET" in our text. The

prophet in the preceding verses has shown the lowly Person, the rejection by men, the intense sufferings, the wondrous meekness, the imprisoned condition by death and the grave, of Christ, but he adds: "YET it pleased the LORD [or JEHOVAH] to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief." As much as to say, "There is nought of chance or contingency, of mere accident or oversight, in this; but all according to infinite wisdom and boundless and inconceivable love." So testified the apostle Peter, in his first memorable sermon, after the death and resurrection of Christ: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts ii. 23). To the same effect spake Jesus Himself, in His first appearance to His disciples, after He came forth from the sepulchre "conquering and to conquer:" "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" (Luke xxiv. 25, 26). By this "ought" Christ intended to declare, that all He had undergone was in accordance with the divine purposes and grand covenant settlements of Jehovah, in the counsels of eternity.

Christ's death
eternally ap-
pointed.

Hence, then, believer, this "YET" is as it were the keystone in the foundation of redemption. So much that is rich and full and blessed grows out of it, as the security and for the satisfaction of our faith. An apprehension of the oneness of mind and unity

of purpose of the ever-adorable Trinity is fraught with richest consolation. Our feelings may vary—our faith fluctuate—hopes and fears alternate; but the “YET”—the “YET,” is as it were the bright side of the grand revolving scheme of redemption. Like the beacon on the lightship, turning upon its pivot, it is first dark, then light. Now there is nought to guide the mariner, anon a bright light radiates from yonder tiny chamber, shedding its cheering rays far o’er the troubled waters; so the great scene changes from all the darkness and the gloom and the anguish connected with the Man of Sorrows and the Brother born for adversity, and causes the “YET” to shine forth in all its dazzling splendour, reflecting upon the widespread and troublous ocean of life, the great, the glorious fact, that “it pleased the LORD to bruise Him;” that “He hath put Him to grief;” that “it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Heb. ii. 10): that, as a blessed consequence when He should “make His soul an offering for sin, He should see His seed, He should prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in His hand.”

Reader, the “YET” brings us instrumentally to contemplate the covenant purpose of a covenant God for and on the behalf of a covenant people; and it stands beautifully and blessedly connected with the exclamation of Jesus, and in regard to the seeing of the

**Christ's Love
to His
Church.**

travail of His soul, and being satisfied, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me: for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John xvii. 24). We are reminded also of His own sweet assurance, among His parting words when upon the eve of His sufferings, "Let not your heart be troubled:

ye believe in God, believe also in me. In Christ making my Father's house are many mansions; ready a place if it were not so, I would have told for His people. you. I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv. 1—3). Believer, the "YET" in the grand covenant scheme of redemption will do to live by and to die by.

We shall now, dear reader, as the Lord the Spirit may enable, proceed to consider our little but mighty watchword, as it takes its position in the midst of the many states and stages of the child of God's experience during his sojourn in this vale of tears, and whilst on pilgrimage to "the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." As already intimated, we have glanced at the "YET" as it stands in the grand covenant plan of salvation; now let us examine it as it appears in the daily experience of the living stones which the Great Master Builder is preparing for their several positions in the vast superstructure. And observe particularly, as previously intimated, how the "YET" stands at one time

as the *promise of Jehovah*, and, at another, as the sweet *plea of faith* based upon that promise.

THE LORD JEHOVAH REMONSTRATING WITH PHARAOH.

Exod. ix. 17: "*As YET exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?*"

Now here is a remonstrance upon the part of Jehovah with Pharaoh, because he would not as *yet* let His people go. He had not only plainly intimated by the mouth of Moses and Aaron what was His good pleasure respecting His people, but He had ratified and confirmed their testimony and the genuineness of their mission, by plague upon plague, and judgment upon judgment. But for the natural hardness and obduracy of the human heart, any one of these plagues would have been sufficient to have aroused the fears of Pharaoh, and wrought a willingness to fall in with what was most clearly the mind of God. This, however, was not the case, and proves to a demonstration the truth of the poet's words,

"Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone."

Wrath and indignation, be it manifested in never so formidable a manner, will never mellow nor meeten the sinner. The "terrors of the Lord" may for a little season hold him in check; but, let those terrors be withdrawn, or the hand of the Lord relaxed, and

such sinner, unrestrained, will only go to the greater depths and to the more perilous extremes in transgression. Sin is of a fearfully-hardening character; and it is astonishing to see how those who once appeared to possess a wholesome dread of the veriest de-

Sin of a
hardening
nature.

parture from what their early teaching and training had instrumentally wrought in them, are brought afterwards, under a seared conscience and a hardened heart, to "sin as it were with a cart-rope" (Isa. v. 18). In proof of the dreadfully-hardening nature of sin, it is recorded of one inured to the commission of one of its most heinous and destructive practices, "She eateth and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness" (Prov. xxx. 20). Perhaps the most painfully-striking proof of the working of sin, and that even in one of the Lord's own children—yea, even in him who was declared to be "a man after His own heart"—was that of David, who, after the commission of the awful crimes of murder and adultery, remained for many months in a state of impenitency; and actually saw not his own likeness in the

The sin of
David and
its effects.

parable which was brought so strikingly before him, until God was pleased to fix the charge, "Thou art the man!" upon his conscience. Now, when we see the effects of sin upon such a man as the "sweet singer of Israel"—he who had such access to and communion with the Lord—it is easy to account for the state of mind into which the heathenish Pharaoh sank, from time to time, when plague after plague

had been removed. His surroundings must be considered—those with whom he was in daily association, as well as what, upon merely natural grounds, would seem unreasonable, namely, the surrender of so large a portion of the community, whose services he would not only lose, but whom he might fear would become a powerful ally against his throne and dominion. We touch upon these points, reader, just to show how poor human nature would argue, and not in the leastwise to palliate or make light of Pharaoh's sin. God forbid! Oh, what a blessing is a tender conscience, and how sweet and timely that plea of the psalmist's, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults. Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me" (Psalm xix. 12, 13).

Prayerful
searching of
heart.

It was no doubt, moreover, the remembrance of the past, with its hardening sins and abominations, that led him so emphatically at the close of the 139th Psalm to exclaim, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

There is, however, dear reader, one special point which we must not overlook in the verse, and that is the Lord's kind and condescending and most gracious recognition of Israel. "As yet exaltest thou thyself against *my people*, that thou wilt not let them go?" Oh, how sweet and how encouraging is this to a poor sinner, feelingly such. When we re-

collect the character of those whom the Lord is here pleased to call His people; when we read what Moses said concerning them, after their well-nigh forty years' wilderness wanderings: "Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the Lord" (Deut. ix, 7); when, we say, this is considered, how well may we stand in holy wonder and admiration as we contemplate the patience, the forbearance, the long-suffering of Jehovah. How well, moreover, may we take comfort and encouragement, as we reflect upon that forbearance and long-suffering, and as so strikingly illustrative of the name by which He had declared Himself, as we read, "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation" (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7).

Jehovah's
great and
glorious
Name.

THE LORD'S PITIFULNESS AND COMPASSION.

"And YET for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the Lord their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I am the Lord" (Lev. xxvi. 44, 45).

In the previous part of the chapter the Lord has testified of severe judgments and chastisements upon Israel, in the event of their backsliding in the land whither He led them. Among His denunciations are

some of the most painful and agonizing.
 The Lord's For example, the Lord says: "If ye
 chastise- shall despise my statutes, or if your soul
 ments. abhor my judgments, so that ye will

not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it" (Lev. xxvi. 15, 16). Then, after further threatenings, upon the ground of disobedience and rebellion, the Lord adds: "If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity

of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; and that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land" (Lev. xxvi. 40—42).

Ah, reader, there is very much contained in the expression, "accept of the punishment of their iniquity." Do *you* know anything personally and experimentally *what* is meant by it? Notwithstanding his previous hardness and impenitency, to which we before adverted, the psalmist, when convinced by the Holy Ghost of sin, "accepted of the punishment of his iniquity." Mark, in proof, the meekness and the tenderness of his walk, in connexion with the cursings of Shimei, and when Abishai asked that he might "go over, and take off his head:" "And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him. It may

Appeal to
the reader.

be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day”

(2 Sam. xvi. 10—12). What a sweet enviable spirit was that which the psalmist thus exhibited! Again, he “accepted of the punishment of his iniquity,” when he exclaimed, in reference to his

numbering the people, “Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? let Thine hand, I pray Thee, be against me, and against my father’s house” (2 Sam. xxiv. 17). Micah “accepted of the punishment of his iniquity,” when he said, “I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold His righteousness” (Micah vii. 9). The dying

The Dying Thief. thief “accepted the punishment of his iniquity” when he declared to his fellow-sufferer, “And we indeed justly;

for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss” (Luke xxiii. 41).

Having, therefore, as before said, testified of His chastisements in return for Israel’s misdeeds, the Lord, in the pitifulness and compassion with which He is ever pleased to regard His people, brings in a merciful qualification—introduces a beautiful and a blessed “*YET* :” “And *yet* for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them :

for I am the Lord their God. But I will for their
sakes remember the covenant of their
ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the
heathen, that I might be their God : I am the Lord ”
(Lev. xxvi. 44, 45). Ah, yes, He is God, and not man.
He is well acquainted with the creatures He has
formed. He “ knoweth our frame, He remembereth
that we are dust ” (Ps. ciii. 14). Most graciously
has the Lord said, “ I will not contend for ever,
neither will I be always wroth : for the spirit should
fail before me, and the souls which I have made ”
(Isa. lvii. 16).

Oh, how tender and compassionate is the Lord ;
who “ remembered us in our low estate ;
for His mercy endureth for ever ” (Ps. cxxxvi. 23). And, as in the instance be-
fore us, how constantly does He testify of His great
and glorious name, setting forth thereby how, in con-
nexion with His name, He has covenanted to be to
and for His people all that they can possibly need.
How lovingly does the Lord here anticipate the de-
solation and distress of His children, when in a
strange land, wherein they have been captivated
and ensnared through evil association and by means
of their frail and fallen flesh. How He encourages
them, even under such circumstances, and in con-
nexion with their being brought to “ accept the
punishment of their iniquity,” again to look to and
hope in Himself, and saying as He does, “ I am
the Lord,” or, still more blessed, “ I am the Lord

their God," He, as it were, puts the self-same plea into their mouth as that which Joshua presented, when, in regard to Jehovah's threatenings with respect to rebellious Israel, he said, "And what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?" (Josh. vii. 9.)

Reader, do you know anything of these pleadings? Have you ever been reduced to such straits and difficulties, either in providence or grace, or with respect to both, that all and everything else has given way; and, whilst your entire self—with all your personal and relative interests—past, present, and to come—have been apparently imperilled; your position has been momentous in the extreme; creature aid has failed on every hand; man is powerless; all fleshly arguments or human reasoning fail: one thing—and that alone—remains: it is an appeal to God, and that upon the ground of His great name! Reader, it is solemn yet blessed work. The going in before the King with the language, "Refuge faileth me—no man careth for my soul," "neither know (I) what to do, but (my) eyes are upon Thee" (2 Chron. xx. 13).

THE LOOK AND THE LONGING.

"Then I said, I am cast out of Thy sight ; YET I will look again toward Thy holy temple" (Jonah ii. 4).

Reader, we are brought, as above, to another blessed Faith's "YET." It is, moreover, one that will just suit a poor soul that is conscious of waywardness, self-will, and rebellion, and who, under a felt knowledge thereof, feels how deserving he is of Jehovah's just wrath and righteous indignation. He is sensible of what a transgressor he has been ; of how he has sinned against light and love and covenant privilege. He looks back, and he sees how his perverse, self-willed course has brought him into present troubles, deep straits, and critical complicated paths. He discovers no way of escape. He feels the chastising hand of God heavily upon him. If he has not been a backslider in *act*, he is bound to acknowledge he has been in *heart* ; and bitterly does he feel the force of that Scripture, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways" (Prov. xiv. 14). He falls under the word : "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet : and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place" (Isa. xxviii. 17). He trembles at the

Heart sins
and their
bitter fruit.



smile, His favour, the token upon token and proof upon proof of His love—his language from day to day and hour to hour is, “If Thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence” (Exod. xxxiii. 15). Hence Jonah’s absolutely seeking to “flee from the [felt] presence of the Lord” is the more flagrant. Had he remained where he was, and reasoned or remonstrated with Jehovah, as Moses or Gideon had done before him, his conduct would seem to be less marked; but for him at once to have fled in the very face of the Lord’s plain and positive directions—to pursue a directly opposite course—makes his sin the more presumptuous and awful. And do observe, dear reader, the Holy Ghost has marked the flagrancy and enormity of this sin thus: He twice names it in the selfsame verse, as much as to say, “Mark this; incredible as it may appear, it is nevertheless a fact, he found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it to go with them unto Tarshish *from the presence of the Lord*” (Jonah i. 3). But note, dear reader, the Lord’s eye was upon this rebel-wanderer, and that, moreover, in a twofold sense: first, in a way of fatherly chastisement; secondly, equally in a way of fatherly care and compassion. “The Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken” (Jonah i. 4). Reader, the winds and the waves obey Him! This was more than Jonah did. Man, although born in the image of His great and gracious Creator, has fallen not only beneath the

brute that perisheth, but even below inanimate nature. The wondrous faculties with which Jehovah hath endowed the masterpiece of His hand are perverted and abused even to the shame and dishonour of Him "in whom we live, and move, and have our being."

"Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep" (Jonah i. 5). Reader, see, as stated in a former page, what sin will do. How desperately callous and indifferent it renders the human mind; aye, and the minds, too, of those who have been better taught, and even savingly instructed! The winds blew and the waves beat, but neither the one nor the other awoke the sleeping Jonah.

"So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah" (Jonah i. 6, 7). "*The lot fell upon Jonah!*" Reader, the Lord knows *where* as well as *when* to find out His people. Nor will He (blessed be His name!) let them long wander from Him. He knows them too well, and He loves them too dearly, to let that most

solemn word have too long or too severe an application: "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone" (Hosea iv. 17). "Let him alone! let him alone!" This is an awful saying. One is disposed to exclaim, "Anything but this, Lord. Never, never, we beseech Thee, say, 'Let him alone!'" Oh, the fearful consequences of being "let alone!" Reader, reader, what would have become of you, or what of the poor, frail, ever-erring writer, had the Lord said of either the one or the other, "Let him alone?" Well may the poet say,

"But more the treacherous calm I dread,
Than tempests bursting o'er my head."

"Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us? What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou? And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them" (Jonah i. 8—10). The Lord will, sooner or later, make all His people honest. They can by no means assume a character, or play the hypocrite, long together. *Conviction* must lead to *confession*. If the Lord's children *sin* before the world, He will make them *say so*. He will not wink or connive at sin in His own people, much and tenderly as He loves them.

"Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth

Jonah into the sea; so shall the sea be calm
 aroused to unto you: for I know that for my sake
 a sense of this great tempest is upon you" (Jonah
 his sin. i. 11, 12). Ah, here was honesty and

faith, too—yea, wonderful faith. Rely upon it, reader, it was not in recklessness—it was not in rebellion now—that Jonah made such a proposition. No, he was made sensible of his sin: he felt the enormity of his transgression; he perceived how his forwardness and self-will had imperilled, not merely his own life, but the lives of others; and hence, under the deep consciousness of his guiltiness, he "accepted the punishment of his iniquity." Faith, we maintain, must have been wonderfully in exercise at this juncture; Jonah was evidently prepared to fall into the hands of the Lord, in such striking contrast to the cowardice and self-will of which he had previously been the subject.

"Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them. Wherefore they cried unto the Lord, and said, We beseech Thee, O Lord, we beseech Thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for Thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased Thee. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased

from her raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows. Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights" (Jonah i. 13—17). "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly." Jehovah was still "the Lord *his* God," although he had so sinned against divine relationship and covenant privilege. Ah, reader, what a mercy it is that the Church of the redeemed is so "hidden in Christ," and so everlastingly secure in Him, that, although left to itself it may fall—yea, sin egregiously—yet it can never apostatize! "I will put my fear into their hearts," says the Lord, "that they shall not depart from me" (Jer. xxxii. 40). Here is the security, not in the creature, but in the Lord Himself. And mark where Jonah prayed: "out of the fish's belly," or, to use his own words, "Out of the belly of hell cried I." Reader, do you know anything of such experience as this? Do you know what it is to go down, as it were, into the depths of hell or the grave? Are you experimentally familiar with the language of David, "The sorrows of death compassed me, the pains of hell gat hold upon me" (Psalm cxvi. 3)? Ah, who but those who have felt it can conceive what these "sorrows" are—**Soul-distress, but not soul-destruction.** what the darkness—what the gloom—what the intense recoiling from what presents itself as fearful and repugnant and loathing to the last degree? Such a crushing weight upon

the heart—such a gnawing at the root of every pursuit or engagement—such a total absence of all that was once pleasant, agreeable, or satisfactory! in a word, a state of real heart-sorrow and soul-anguish. It is perfectly marvellous how the poor sinner is upheld and sustained under such circumstances. Such sustaining is not in the leastwise attributable to personal knowledge or experience, because he is for the time being at least void of all peace or comfort or satisfaction. His safety is not of *self*, but wholly and solely of God! But do observe, dear reader, although thus situated, “Jonah prayed;” aye, and prayed, too, without doubt, never so simply—never so earnestly—never with such a single eye and aim. No mere compliment, no cold duty, no formal utterance, no heartlessness, but sincere thorough earnestness—real heart-work—a matter between Jonah and his God, Him and none else. The Jacob-wrestling this! The fish’s belly—the “belly of hell!” aye, this is the place of all places to pray, dark, drear, dismal though it be. See the issue—mark the blessed effects—“I cried by reason [or out] of mine affliction unto the Lord, *and He heard me;*” yea, more—deeper, deeper still—“out of the belly of hell cried I, *and Thou heardest my voice.*” Oh, what mercy was this! Ah, yes, the Lord saw His child, and heard his voice. “For Thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the sea” (mark, it was *the Lord* had done it; and, be your position or your trials what they may, it is *the Lord* has to do with the whole), “and the floods compassed me about; all

Thy billows and Thy waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of Thy sight." But, if *cast out*, not *cast off*. Ah, here was the mercy.

Cast out, we may be, in appearance and according to feeling and apprehension. *Cast out*, but not *cast off*.

Cast off, never! None could have sunk lower than Jonah. No case could possibly seem more hopeless than his. If any condition appeared to be a decided one, and that destructively so, it was Jonah's! Thrown overboard! Had sunk apparently into the depths of ocean; or, if not, had been swallowed up at one fell gulp! Jonah alive, and that in a fish's belly, hour after hour, and day after day? "Absurd!" says poor fallible man. "'Tis verily so," saith faith. And what saith Jonah, even under these otherwise hopelessly-perilous circumstances? "Then I said, I am cast out of Thy sight; *YET*" (oh, that blessed *YET*, it is the anchor holding well and firmly the shattered bark) "*YET* will I look again toward Thy holy temple."

As previously intimated, what condition could have appeared more hopelessly destructive than that of Jonah's? In addition to what he had previously stated as to being cast into the deep, and out of Jehovah's sight, he says, "The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head." So that he was so bound and entangled, that (humanly speaking) there was no chance whatever of escape; so bound and entangled, it was impossible that he could free himself: all human hopes or creature-

efforts were vain. Naught but a miracle could save him. He further adds: "I went down to the bottom of the mountains: the earth with her bars was about me for ever." So that it would seem as though all the powers of nature were combined to secure his destruction, and to seal his hapless doom.

Reader, is there not something of a living soul's experience in all this? Is not this the condition—are not these the sensations—these the fears, the

Dark dark, the gloomy apprehensions of an
 providences. awakened sinner, but more especially
 of a poor backslider, under the frowns

of Divine Providence, and the hidings of a Father's face? Oh, what intense darkness—a "darkness which may indeed be felt"—is that which sets in upon the soul that has known what the sweet, the cheering, the invigorating light of a Father's countenance is, when that countenance is veiled! It brings the soul into a painful agonizing familiarity with the "horror of great darkness" of which we read with respect to Abraham (Gen. xv. 12). There is no disputing the fact that where a knowledge of the Lord has been personally and experimentally realized, and where that precious Scripture has been specially felt, "They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance" (Psalm lxxxix. 15), there is no forgetting it; there is no satisfaction or contentment with anything short of it. We do love the words of Dr. WATTS, as bearing upon this subject:

"My God, my life, my love,
 To Thee, to Thee I call;

I cannot live, if Thou remove,
For Thou art all in all.

"Thy smiling grace can cheer
This dungeon where I dwell;
'Tis *Paradise* if Thou art here,
If Thou depart, 'tis *hell*."

Ah, yes, it is the presence of the Lord that turns night into day, death into life, hell into heaven! What was it that made the vast distinction between the three Hebrews in the burning fiery furnace, Daniel in the lions' den, and Jonah in the fish's belly? First, a sense of guilt as possessing the latter in contrast to the former; the one was where he was in just retribution for his rebellion, the others for the trial of their faith. Secondly, the absence, in point of joyful realization, of the Lord's presence. It was this that made the distinction. To have experienced this—to have felt the Lord with him in sweet and blessed manifestation, Jonah would have been quite as happy where he was in depths of ocean as the Hebrews in the burning fiery furnace, or Daniel in the den of lions. Reader, have you not proved this again and again in affliction and trouble? The Lord has so revealed Himself—so sustained and so soothed and so cheered—that you have forgotten all about circumstances—dangers, difficulties, distresses—in the sweet and blessed contemplation of Himself! Himself has been all-absorbing! Himself has engrossed every wish and thought! Himself has excluded all else! Himself hath led you to understand Paul's language, when caught up into

The felt
presence of
the Lord.

the third heaven, and respecting which he said, "Whether I was in the body or out of the body, I could not tell" (2 Cor. xii. 2). Himself, in a word, was emphatically, at that time and under that rich and blessed experience, your "all and in all!" Oh, what peace! Oh, what satisfaction! Oh, what joy! Oh, what rapture! Oh, what a glorious anticipation of being with Him and like Him for ever! Ah, that beautiful and blessed "yet," dear reader, as bearing upon these seasons and this stage of experience: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not YET appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 2).

But observe the sustaining power as well as the divine faithfulness of Jehovah, in the absence of this peace and joy and holy triumph, as flowing from the Lord's felt presence. Jonah adds to Faith's appeal. what he had before testified about his *cast-out* but not *cast-off* condition: "YET hast Thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God." He recognizes, as indeed he was compelled to do from the very nature of the circumstances in which he was placed, that it was the Lord, and the Lord alone, was his Sustainer and Deliverer; and then, by precious faith and in the absence of personal comfort and enjoyment, adds—and that, too, without presumption, "O Lord, *my* God." Yea, it was his very position, and his very deliverance, that, under God, contributed to his knowledge of this great and glorious fact, that the Lord was *his* God.

Dear reader, this is very suggestive. If you know what the darkness, the deathliness, the apparently-impending doom and destruction are, and yet have been sustained and upheld and delivered, by whom and of whom was that sustaining and upholding deliverance but the Lord? Oh, how sweet the truth:

“Many days have passed since then,
Many changes I have seen;
Yet have been upheld till now—
Who couldst hold me up but Thou?”

Now it is well, in the absence of all present peace or enjoyment, to seek to recognize and acknowledge this fact. Surely the psalmist had this mercy in view when he said, “By this I know that

Thou favourest me, because mine Dejection,
enemy doth not triumph over me” but not
(Psalm xli. 11). As much as to say, destruction.

“Well, although I am not where I would be, nor enjoy what I wish for, yet this I must admit, that my fears have not been realized in regard to my enemy’s obtaining the mastery. Although I am still in bonds, he has naught to boast of. I am *alive*, although not *at large*. I have at least been *defended*, though not *delivered*.” Reader, it is a mercy to realize and acknowledge this.

Again, says Jonah, “When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord.” Ah, that fainting! that utter prostration! that total self-despair! There is a remarkable expression in Lev. xxvi. 36: “And upon them that are left alive of you *I will send a faintness into their hearts* in the land of their enemies;

and the sound of a shaken [or driven] leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall flee when none pursueth." Ah, yes, notwithstanding all the proud boast and the fleshly confidence of the creature, it is but for God to withdraw His commonly and providentially sustaining hand, and that creature-confidence and carnal self-sufficiency will give way in a moment; and then shall such painfully know what it is "to be in fear where no fear was" (Psalm lviii. 5), or to be even "utterly consumed with terrors" (Psalm lxxiii. 19). Now, although David and Jonah fainted, yet for them there was a special and a peculiar mercy, as well as for all the Lord's dear children in like circumstances, and, without doubt, it was the Lord's pledge and the Lord's gracious fulfilment of that pledge, that was brought so vividly and so refreshingly and encouragingly to Jonah's mind, in this his fainting and apparently undone condition. Familiar as he must have been with the Lord's dealings with His ancient people, and well read (as doubtless he was) in the writings of Moses, how blessed the recollection, as brought to his mind by the Holy Ghost, must have been that or some similar word, "Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; for the Lord your God is He that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you" (Deut. xx. 3, 4). Moreover, Jonah

Fainting
and
fearing.

was unquestionably most familiar with the psalms of David ; and, as he pondered upon his saying, " I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living " (Psalm xxvii. 13), he considered how wondrously the Lord had delivered David from Saul, and all who had conspired against him, and thus richly and blessedly confirmed all his hopes and expectations of sustaining strength and delivering mercy. Then again Jonah would muse upon the 107th Psalm, that blessed summary of the Lord's dealings with His dear people ; and, as he thought upon the " redeemed " and " the gathered " as " wandering in the wilderness in a solitary way," and " finding no city to dwell in," he would remember that it was also recorded of them, that " hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses."

Recollections
and
retracings.

Consider, dear reader, what faintness is literally—a sinking, melting, overpowering, irresistible feeling, in which the whole frame seems exhausted, powerless, helpless to the last degree—the nearest approach to or resemblance of death itself of which we can form any conception. Such is sometimes the condition physically, and such at times the condition spiritually—a most thorough prostration—an indescribable sinking of heart, deep depression, crushing of soul. At such times it is specially and peculiarly

Prostrate,
but
pleading.

felt that "vain is the help of man" (Psalm lx. 11). But now turn to the last five verses of the 40th of Isaiah, and see the wondrous provision there made by Jehovah against such a state and condition of soul: "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah xl. 27—31).

When Jonah's soul fainted within him, he testifies he "remembered the Lord." Now, with this remembrance of the Lord Himself—His kind and gracious and merciful character—there was also the remembrance of His loving and tender dealings; and, as Jonah thought upon those dealings with others, there was an inspiring and a prompting to hope and expect the like merciful manifestations of love, grace, and power.

There was, moreover, a felt conviction upon the part of Jonah, that, notwithstanding his perilous and seemingly-hopeless circumstances, his prayer had come in unto the Lord, yea, even into His holy

temple. Ah, reader, it is a wondrous mercy to have this conviction—this holy assurance; with it, even ere there is the veriest sign of deliverance, there is the *earnest* of it—the calm, peaceful, blessed resting in and upon the Lord, as the prayer-hearing and the prayer-answering God. And this holy triumph of faith the Lord never discountenances or disowns.

Jonah adds to his previous testimony, “They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.” Much—very much is involved in this—and which the Lord’s children find to their cost. Their own will and their own way, if sought and indulged, will most assuredly lead to a bitter, distressing sense of the loss of present peace and enjoyment as connected with the manifested mercy and grace inseparable from a denying self, taking up the cross daily, and following the Lord. “But,” says Jonah, “I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving” [what! in the fish’s belly, and with death and destruction staring him in the face? Yes]; “I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.”

No sooner is Jonah brought to this climax, and to testify that “salvation,” in its design, in its operations, in its complete and entire fulfilment, “is of the Lord,” than—as though He were waiting for this—bringing His poor rebel-wanderer down into these dark and dismal depths for this express end and purpose—we read, “and the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.”

No power on earth or in hell can hold a poor soul a moment longer captive, when the Lord Jehovah says, “Loose him, and let him go.”

DIVINE PITY AND FORBEARANCE.

“And Jonah began to enter into the city a day’s journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (JONAH iii. 4).

ANOTHER “yet,” beloved, and it stands connected with the wonderful grace and the astounding mercy, long-suffering, and forbearance of a covenant God, not merely towards His poor frail creatures as such, but especially in regard to His own sent servant the prophet.

Now, first observe the Lord’s tenderness as exhibited in the declaration, “And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah *the second time.*” Here was such a display of Fatherly love and mercy. Notwithstanding all the perverseness and self-will of Jonah, as pre-

The Lord’s loving purpose. previously manifested, the Lord will not suffer Himself to be diverted from His kind and gracious purpose towards the people of Nineveh. Moreover, in

spite of that perverseness and self-will, the Lord condescends still to make use of Jonah as the honoured instrument by whom to convey His message of mercy to that otherwise-doomed people. Had Jehovah acted as man, under the circumstances He would have said, at least as far as Jonah was concerned, “No, *he* shall not be the man to convey my mind. He so abused my trust before, that I will not employ him again. I *forgive* him, but I will not *employ*

him." So far from this, Jehovah, in such a God-like manner, chooses the man who had himself received so much mercy to go upon such an errand of mercy ; because it is clear, from Jonah's own after-testimony, that he felt an inward and all-powerful conviction, that the work to which he Jonah's first convictions. was then condescendingly and graciously called was one of mercy. Hence,—oh, awful sin ! abominable iniquity !—he pleads as an excuse for his non-compliance in regard to going to Nineveh, "Therefore I fled before Thee unto Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of the evil."

Had not this been a great and a glorious fact, dear reader, we ask what would have become of Jonah, and what of you and of ourselves ?

We consider, however, that this very conviction in Jonah's mind tends, in no small degree, to set forth the enormity of his sin, and we shall (as the Holy Ghost may enable) dwell upon it for a little, not from any wish to enlarge upon the nature and operations of sin in itself considered, but simply with a view of setting forth the boundless grace and the marvellous love of Him who "delighteth in mercy ;" so that poor sinners may thus be encouraged to betake themselves to Him, in all their weakness and sin and woe.

Now, observe again, with respect to Jonah's commission, the Lord says : "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city." See how explicit the Lord is :

“that great city ;” intimating, “it is a great work,
Jonah, to which I have called thee:

Jonah's commission. it will expose thee to great danger, and
call for the exercise of great self-denial,

but my great grace shall sustain and encompass thee.”

Moreover, in order that Jonah should not be in any difficulty, nor at any loss as to what to say, or how to act, the Lord adds, so condescendingly and so graciously, “and *preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.*” The Lord says nothing whatever about results or consequences. With that Jonah had naught to do. That was *the Lord's* matter. All that he had to be anxious about, in the present stage of things, was to be obedient—to go forth promptly and faithfully and perseveringly at the Lord's command.

Now, dear reader, this is just the position of God's ministers. They are not called to a warfare at their own charges. They are not called to carry a mes-

Ministerial qualifications. sage of their own. They are the Lord's
messengers. They are not required to
concoct a story, or to make-up a mis-

sion of their own ; but the Lord says to His servants concerning any and every place whither He commissions them to go, “*preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.*” “Thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear” (Ezek. ii. 7). Hence He is no hard Taskmaster. He calls His servants to no unreasonable service ; He exacts nothing from them ; but He is kind and gracious and liberal to the last degree. It may to the eye of poor puny man appear as though He called un-

seemly and unfit men to His service, but the Lord is the best Judge of His own work. He never calls a man without fitting and qualifying that man to and for the work to which He has so called him.

“And Jonah began to enter into the city a day’s journey.” It seems he went courageously into the very heart of the city; he did not linger or loiter upon the mere threshold of it, so that, in case of need, he might beat a hasty retreat; but he braves the danger of being instantly surrounded, and made a prisoner, or peremptorily destroyed; and, with equal courage, because the *Lord* endowed him with such fortitude and such courage, “he cried and said, Y^{et} forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.”

Observe, reader, how very critical the position of Jonah, standing in the midst of a wicked city, given over at the very time to the utmost possible wickedness, and loudly and fearlessly and ardently declaring the doom that awaited it. If Jonah were a timid man, now was the time indeed for that timidity to show itself. None but a God-commissioned and a God-emboldened man was equal to such a state of things; and this, by comparison, will make Jonah’s after-sin appear the greater.

Mark, reader, the immediate effects of Jonah’s preaching; and see if there be anything more striking in the whole Book of God. Discover, if you can, another instance or example where similar results so immediately followed. Moses’ cautions and admonitions and remonstrances were backed up and sup-

ported by plague after plague, and judgment upon judgment; but where were there issues and effects to compare with this simple preaching of Jonah? The Lord Jesus Christ Himself preached and prophesied, admonished and appealed, but what effect had even His testimony upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as compared with the operations upon the minds of the men of Nineveh at the preaching

Prompt
results of
Jonah's
preaching.

of Jonah? Mark our Lord's own comment upon this momentous subject, "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here" (Matt. xii. 41). "So"—as if at once—instantly—without any doubt or hesitation whatever—"So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything: let them not feed, nor drink water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent,

and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not ? ”

Mark, reader, from these verses the immediate and the marvellous results of Jonah's preaching ; and conceive (if you can) a more signal recognition and honour being upon any man's testimony.

Here was: I. “The people of Nineveh believed God.” They did not simply give to Jonah a hearing, and then consider whether or not they should attach any importance to his statements ; but they at once recognized him as a messenger from God, and received and believed his message. Now, let this fact stand in contrast with that of those who were within hearing of the words and beheld so continuously the works of Noah prior to the flood, how marked that contrast is ! In what a very partial, and in how extremely limited, a degree can it be said with respect to the labours of any servant of God—however long, earnestly, and uninterruptedly he may have raised his warning voice among a people—that “they believed God ;” that is, that they received the testimony of the man of God. Hence, we contend, it was a most signal honour placed upon Jonah's mission—an honour almost without parallel, when we take into consideration the promptitude and the general and indiscriminate reception of his words.

Jonah's
success in
contrast with
others.

II. “They put on sackcloth, and proclaimed a fast.” No greater proof could they have given of

the genuineness and sincerity of their belief of Jonah's message. That belief did not simply consist in their giving utterance to so many idle words, which lacked depth and power, and the effects of which passed away like "a morning cloud or the early dew;" but they felt the force and the significancy of his declaration, which was at once bold and decisive. The occasion admitted of no mildness or moderation; but, in accordance with the nature and terms of his commission, he must adopt language of the strongest, firmest, and most unmistakable and conclusive

Boldness character. Oh, what an example were
for God and this of Jonah's for every sent servant
His truth. of God to follow! Not more real and significant was the nature of his mission to Nineveh, than is the commission of every messenger of God to poor perishing sinners.

III. There was, as previously intimated, the universality of the movement. Now, it will be remembered, with respect to the earnest and ardent manner in which Lot besought his sons-in-law, saying, "Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city," that it is recorded, "But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law." They heeded not. Again, in reference to the intimation given of one of the last plagues with which Jehovah was about to visit Egypt, it is said, that "He that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses: and he that regarded not the word of the Lord left his servants and his cattle in the field" (Exod. ix.

20, 21). Here we have proof of the natural hardness and impenitency of poor fallen humanity. All the previous plagues, as well as now the renewed warnings and admonitions of Moses, were insufficient to arouse a wholesome concern in the minds of these men who despised the word of the Lord, as thus spoken by the mouth of His servant.

But how different was it with the people of Nineveh, who "put on sackcloth from the greatest of them even to the least of them!" thus, in a general and universal way, practically acknowledging their sin, and entreating for divine forbearance and mercy.

IV. The king himself (having heard of Jonah's prophetic declaration) gave personal heed thereto, by at once rising from his throne, and laying aside his robe, and covering himself with sackcloth, and sitting in ashes. Here again, we ask, where is there a parallel case given in the whole Book of God, of so prompt and so signal an example, as for royalty itself to set aside all human glory and earthly dignity, through the weight and significance of the simple word of a man; that word, however, being clothed with divine authority and power? Here, reader, was the secret of the matter. This is the only way in which it can be accounted for, namely, that God Himself gave dignity and importance and irresistible significance to the commission with which he had condescendingly entrusted His servant.

The Ninevites
in contrast
with the
Egyptians.

Even royalty
affected.

V. The king, under the weight that pressed upon his heart, publishes far and wide the decree, that there should be a universal fast, both upon the part of man and beast. Moreover, he urges that man should cry mightily unto God, and turn every one from his evil way. What stronger proof of real penitency and genuine sorrow could have been given? Moreover, he adds—and in this glorifies Jehovah in no small

degree—"Who can tell if God will
 Hope turn and repent, and turn away from
 in God. His fierce wrath, that we perish not?"

Once more, we ask the reader to place this conduct and this language upon the part of the king of Nineveh in contrast with the words and actions of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

Then how gracious and how encouraging is the record, "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not."

We now, dear reader, proceed to contemplate the conduct of Jonah; and, in doing so, it is for the express purpose of setting forth, in so far as our poor feeble powers can do, the boundless love and the astounding grace and the matchless patience and forbearance of the God with whom both Jonah had, and you and ourselves have, to do.

In immediate connexion with the declaration just before made of the Lord's regarding with complacency and compassion the penitential acts of the people of Nineveh, we read that "it displeased Jonah,

and he was very angry." Instead of being overwhelmed with astonishment and gratitude that the Lord had caused an apparently-doomed people to give heed to his words, and then (of God's great mercy) save themselves from the judgments and the destruction that awaited them, his proud heart was mortified and vexed to the last degree. He would sooner that that whole city should have perished, than that *his* prophecy should not have been fulfilled. There is no qualifying his conduct. It would be sinful on our part to make it less sin on his. His sin, we consider, was of the very deepest hue. It was not only a gross abuse of the Lord Jehovah's merciful forbearance and lovingkindness, but it was the indulgence, on the part of Jonah, of a spirit that embraced the foul element of murder. We consider that, in the eye of pure and unsullied Omniscience, it must have involved this, and nothing less than this.

Jonah's
murderous
desires.

Mark again, reader, the spirit and tone of his prayer: "And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live" (Jonah iv. 1—3). Now observe, what was couched in this prayer:

Abuse of
Divine
compassion.

1. A remonstrating with God ; a virtual telling Him that He was not to be trusted in the carrying out or the executing of His threats : and assigning this as a reason why he was unwilling to enter upon the work to which he was called.

2. It was a throwing back as it were into the very face of God, that tenderness and patience and forbearance which are so essentially characteristic of a God that "delighteth in mercy;" and this was the more flagrant in Jonah, inasmuch as he had so recently experienced such mercy and goodness at the hand of the Lord.

3. It was a dictating to the Lord, and an entreating Him to take away a life which had just been so sovereignly and miraculously preserved. Moreover, not only did his language betray a total absence of submission to the divine will, but likewise a spirit of rebellion akin, if not absolutely equal to, self-murder.

4. His going out of the city, and watching to see what might become of it, was practically expressive of a hope that the Lord might again alter His purpose, and destroy the city. Hence Jonah had not the slightest feeling in common with the inhabitants of the city who fasted and prayed, covered themselves with sackcloth, and sat in ashes, with the hope that God might yet have mercy upon them.

Now, reader, to sum up, we would call your attention to two things : first, to the deeply soul-humbling fact of what men—yea, God's own servants—are

capable when left to the pride and depravity of their own hearts. That Jonah was a servant of God there can be no doubt; this we sought to show in our last paper. But there is no sin or abomination into which God's own people may not fall if left of Him; nay, there is a sense in which *they* are more exposed to sin, and more likely to fall into it, than the worldling: it is in that they are more a mark for Satan than those whom as yet he feels to be his prey. Such is Satan's hatred against Christ, and all who bear His image, that he would make a more deadly attack upon them than others who neither knew nor cared to love and serve Him.

Godly men
special
marks for
Satan.

Secondly. How marvellously is displayed in connexion with Jonah and his self-will and rebellion, the pity, the patience, the long-suffering, the compassion of Jehovah. It was richly and blessedly exhibited with respect to the king and the people of Nineveh, in regard to whom it is shown how reluctant the Lord is to destroy, and how ready to receive the tokens and evidences of real penitence and sorrow. But oh, in reference to Jonah, with his better light, deeper teaching, and so recent marvellous deliverance from the most imminent of perils, how great the grace, how rich the love, how astounding the mercy, how boundless the compassion, how infinite the patience, how divine the forbearance, how wondrous the long-suffering of Him who said to Jonah, "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which

Jehovah's
marvellous
mercy.

thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night. And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" (Jonah iv. 10, 11).

What sinner (however deeply-dyed or long standing his sin)—what poor backslider
No sinner ing his sin)—what poor backslider
need despair. against, or abuser of light and love,
need despair of mercy or renewed forgiveness and compassion after such a declaration as this?

PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE;

OR, DIVINE FAITHFULNESS AND ALL-SUFFICIENCY
IN LIFE, IN DEATH, AND TO ALL ETERNITY.

“Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us” (2 Cor. i. 10).

BELOVED, can any language be more comprehensive? Does it not in very deed embrace, as above intimated, the past, the present, and the future?

Now, to whichever death the apostle here refers, the deliverance from such death is wholly and solely attributable to God! To Him, and Him alone, is all the praise and glory due. Let us look at it, dear reader, in its twofold aspect, and then seek to trace delivering mercy up to the gracious acts of a covenant Jehovah.

It becomes increasingly necessary, in the day in which we live, when error is rife on every hand, and when the fundamental truths of our most holy faith are so vigorously assailed, to place before our readers, as plainly and forcibly as we can, facts as presented to us in God's most holy book. “To the law and to the testi- Appeal to the Scriptures.
mony; if they speak not according to these, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. viii. 20).

Now, by reference to the second chapter of Genesis, we read in the 16th and 17th verses, “And the Lord

commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," or margin, "dying, thou shalt die." In the next chapter, in which particulars are given of the serpent's beguiling Eve, and the eating of the forbidden tree, and giving to her husband, and his eating thereof also, we read, as the summary of the condemnation there pronounced, "And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. iii. 17—19).

Hence, then, reader, the entrance of spiritual death into our world. Adam fell, and the whole of his posterity (without a solitary exception) fell in and by him. And thus his sin not only involved him and his in spiritual death, but it entailed upon him, and upon them, natural death; and (without divine intervention) eternal death also. Thus a threefold death was introduced by sin; death spiritual, and (as we have shown) *all* are the sub-

jects of *this* death. Then, with respect to the second death, as yet there have been but *two* exceptions from Adam down to the present moment: these were Enoch and Elijah. The only other exceptions will be those of whom the apostle Paul speaks in the 15th chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, where, at the 51st and 52nd verses, he says: "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep (that is, we shall not all *die*), but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Speaking of the universal fall and its consequences, the same apostle elsewhere says: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. v. 12). There is a third death, and that the effects of sin; it is eternal death, where, we read, "the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark ix. 44).

Now the apostle, in his various epistles, makes repeated reference to the spiritual death of which we have spoken. Take an example: "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. ii. 1). Not more void of animal life are those whose poor bodies lie mouldering in the graveyards than is every son and daughter of Adam by nature destitute of true spiritual life. Nor can any power short of Divine and Almighty power impart that life. It is the distinct province of God the Holy Ghost, and

Spiritual
death.

Him alone, to communicate that life. It were ten thousand times easier to give natural life (and where can there be a greater impossibility?) than to impart a single spark of spiritual life to those still "dead in trespasses and sins."

However humbling this truth may be, dear reader—and we admit it *is* most humiliating—still it is fraught with the richest satisfaction to those who have experienced the life-giving power of the Holy Ghost. Such know the change that has passed upon them. Such remember what they *were*, and feel what they now *are*. Such are prepared to testify that they were aforetime callous to everything appertaining to the interests of their never-dying souls. Such will honestly declare that up to a certain period "they were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. ii. 12). Such will acknowledge that Jesus was in very deed "as a root out of a dry ground" to them; that "He had no form nor comeliness;" and that He had "no beauty that they should desire Him" (Isa. liii. 2). But

Change of
heart.

ah! now, as the blessed fruits and effects of the mighty work that has been done in them as well as for them, their language is changed from "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke xix. 14), to "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth! where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth

aside by the flocks of Thy companions?" (Sol. Song i. 7.)

Reader, do *you* know anything of this mighty change? Can *you* say Christ is "all your salvation and all your desire?" (2 Sam. xxiii. 5.) Can *you* testify to the great, the glorious fact, that He is "the chiefest among ten thousand," yea, "the altogether lovely?" (Sol. Song v. 10, 16.)

Reader, "what think *ye* of Christ?" Can *you* adopt the words of the poet, and say:

"If asked what of Jesus I think
(Although all my best thoughts are but poor),
I say He's my Meat and my Drink,
My Life, and my Strength, and my Store;
My Shepherd, my Husband, my Friend,
My Saviour from sin and from thrall:
My hope from beginning to end,
My portion, my Lord, and my all?"

Oh, if you can with sincerity say this, you have abundant reason to "thank God and take courage;" for, mark you, Christ is only "precious to them that believe" (1 Peter ii. 7); and to those to whom He is precious on earth He will be a portion to all eternity! It *must* be so; it is, verily, an *impossibility* that it can be otherwise. Upon any other principle the whole covenant scheme of salvation would be defeated, and the grand and glorious redemption of Jesus annihilated, the which can never, never be; for

"O'er heaven's high arch a motto stands engraved,
'None were excluded here who sought the Saviour's aid;'
And o'er the mouth of hell's dark dismal cave,
'Jesus the purchase of His blood will have.'"

The death, however, to which the apostle refers in the words before us, we conceive not to be the spiritual death to which we have adverted (although in a deliverance from that death he elsewhere again and again rejoices), but from one of the many violent deaths to which he had been exposed through the venom of his persecutors. In the 4th chapter of this same epistle, he distinctly states, "We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." We understand that by this language he meant to say, he was always in danger; his natural life was imperilled through the rage and fury of his opposers and the enemies of the cross of Jesus. Go where he would, and address himself to whom he may, he knew that (humanly speaking) he went "with his life in his hand." Mark the apostle's precious language, dear reader, as expressed in the 20th chapter of the Acts, 22nd to 24th verses: "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." And there is not a question that the apostle's happiest seasons on earth were when he was thus testifying of the grace, and the love, and the power of his Lord and Master, although at the very moment his merely natural life was imminently imperilled.

The Apostle's
faith.

Ah, reader, blessed be God, there is indeed a verity in this rich and happy experience! There are those among the Lord's servants now who, in spite, it may be, of the greatest possible human weakness and creature nervousness (so called), have at certain times and under certain circumstances been so completely lifted up out of themselves, and so raised above all fleshly fears and fleshly foes, as to be absolutely indifferent about all results and consequences. So precious has been the word of the Lord, and so all-powerful has been the grace then and there communicated, that there has been the fullest, the heartiest, the most unquestionable realization of all the fulness and the blessedness of the utterance, "Neither count I my life dear unto myself." Yea, there has been, at such times and seasons, a thorough practical understanding of *Luther's* not counting himself *worthy* of martyrdom for the sake of Jesus, and of *Rutherford's* hearty desire, in the gaol of Aberdeen, to be led forth as a martyr for the selfsame loving and lovely Lord. These things, we admit, dear reader, are *supernatural*, and not *often* experienced by even the Lord's most highly-favoured servants; still we unhesitatingly testify, that such have been in positions when these have been their happy and highly-privileged emotions. And we dwell upon the fact, in order to prove the Lord's all-sufficiency, and to encourage the weak, and the doubting, and the dismayed, in regard to any trials or persecutions which may be coming upon the earth.

Willingness
to suffer
for Christ.

Many, very many, of the dear children of God are sorely affrighted as they contemplate themselves in their weakness and cowardice ; and they say, "In the event of persecutions, such as have been, again occurring, how would their little faith stand so severe a test?" Ah, beloved, His grace is as powerful, and as all-sufficient, and as sure of being imparted, in case of need, now as ever. There is not the shadow of a doubt in our own mind, that, should the present state of things wear a still more formidable aspect, and should those events which are clearly foreshown by the prophet Daniel, and in the Revelation, come about in our own time, or in a future generation,

the Lord's own dear children will not only be specially sustained and divinely supported, but as specially and as divinely cheered and comforted. In proof, mark the precious language of our dear

Perilous times
motives for
rejoicing
in faith and
hope.

Lord and Master, who, after testifying of "men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth," says: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke xxi. 28). Observe, moreover, what the Lord thrice affirms within the compass of two verses by the prophet Joel: "And my people shall never be ashamed" (Joel ii. 26, 27). Now what language can be more definite or comprehensive? Hence the every condition—weak, and timid, and trembling as it may be—of the every child of God must be embraced in the declaration.

And we verily believe, as in the past so in the future, the very weakest and the most retiming and apprehensive of the Lord's family shall, by the grace imparted in the time of difficulty and danger, "be strong and do exploits" (Dan. xi. 32). The present felt inability or darkness or doubt has nought whatever to say to the matter. The promise runs, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be" (Deut. xxxiii. 25).

"Tis just in the last distressing hour
Our God displays delivering power;
The mount of danger is the place
Where we shall see surprising grace."

We have been personally a good deal exercised, for months past, upon the matter of the article of death. Satan has taken no small advantage of physical weakness and infirmity to suggest, again and again, "How wilt thou do with them in the swellings of Jordan?" (Jer. xii. 5.) What we have passed through during the last two years and upwards in this respect is utterly beyond our power to describe. Suffice it to say, it has exceeded, as far as memory serves, all we had ever previously undergone. Nor could we at all account for it. We were perfectly at a loss to know *why* the Lord thus tried us. We could appeal to Him that, step by step, in all our movements, we had sought counsel of Him and entreated Him never to allow us to take a single step alone; for He well knew—and we well knew also—that, if so left, that step would be sure to be a wrong one. But oh, the depths! oh, the sinkings of heart! oh, that "sen-
The fear of death.

tence of death in ourselves," of which the apostle speaks in immediate connexion with the subject now before us! With the hope that it may meet some poor tried and tempted soul's condition, we will just state that, notwithstanding all that we had been called to pass through during nearly five-and-forty years of a tried and chequered experience, such was our recent gloom, darkness, despondency, that, from our inmost soul, we wished we had never been born! Gladly could we have foregone every hope of eternal bliss and blessedness, if so be we could but have been annihilated. As we have sat in the train, we have envied (*as far as ourselves were concerned*) the passengers in the North of Wales, who were instantly deprived of life, not one of them, we believe, knowing what the article of death was. So completely did "the sorrows of death compass us, and the pains of hell get hold upon us," that we recoiled beyond expression at the very sight of a hearse or mourning coach. We even doubted the *power* of God to deliver us from the dreadful state of darkness and desolation in which our poor soul then was. Although it was a time of "strong crying and tears," yet it seemed as though He "shut out our prayer." What sleepless nights! what anxious days! Often have we thought we must sit down, and then and there die! Yet there was, at the same time, the greatest possible shrinking from the article of death. Oh, what Bible companions were Job and Jeremiah at these seasons! and the Psalmist, also, when he cried, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and

will He be favourable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" (Psalm lxxvii. 7—9). And yet (strange as it may appear) this experience (agonizing though it was) was immediately connected with some of the most blessed times in the pulpit and at the prayer-meeting.

Dear tried and tempted reader, we just briefly touch upon these facts, with the hope that you may see you are not alone in the path of temptation and trial. Mark that word of the apostle Peter, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (1 Peter iv. 12). Greatly at a loss as we were at the time, to think what possible advantage could accrue from that state of things, we are thankful for them now; we rejoice in them now. Oh, blessed be God for that precious statement in Heb. xii. 11: "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. xii. 11). Ah, beloved, it is the "afterward" we need

The
"afterward"
of trial.

patience to wait for; and, if the "afterward" be so blessed on earth, what will it be in heaven? Here even the "afterward" is to be followed by other trials and other temptations; not so the "afterward" there! Oh, no! we shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in a glorious, a blessed, an uninterrupted

and everlasting "afterward," unitedly and joyously to sing "unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

But we have been digressing. We were going on just now to state, with respect to the contemplation of the article of death, that for many years we had been wont to rest upon the promise, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be," as applicable not only to the constant and unceasing necessities of the wilderness, but likewise in regard to the strength and courage and confidence in the hour and article of dissolution. But for a season, as already intimated, we have been divested for most part of this hope, and we have been seeking to realize present peace, present comfort, present strength for that

Dying strength in a solemn hour. Now, as this is not absolutely necessary, so we believe the dying hour.

Lord will not vouchsafe it. Men may count it a bold—a presumptuous—an unscriptural venture to look for—to hope for—to expect "dying strength in a dying hour;" then, and not until then! But we contend that for those who have *known* the Lord—who have *proved* the Lord—who have been familiar with His leadings and teachings and trainings, month after month, and year after year—it may be for many, many years—for such, we say, to hope in Him, to expect from Him, is neither bold, nor presumptuous, nor unscriptural. It is simple

faith; it is a childlike trust; it is a holy reposing: and anything short of it where the possessor is able, upon scriptural grounds, to say, "I know whom I have believed," and "Thou hast known my soul in adversities," is unbelief and distrust, and therefore God-dishonouring.

Now, we are firmly of opinion that it was this simple childlike confidence that prompted the apostle to exclaim, "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we *trust* that He will *yet* deliver us." And oh! consider what that "YET" comprehends, even *the whole remaining future*; yea, that unspeakably blessed state of things of which the apostle speaks in the Second Epistle to Timothy: "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (2 Tim. iv. 18).

Reader, permit us to ask, Did you ever know a single instance wherein such simple childlike trust and confidence was disowned of God, and the subject of it put to shame and confusion? Mark you, we speak not of the vague, nominal, superficial, off-hand exclamation, "Oh, it will be time enough to think of death when death comes. The Lord Himself said, 'Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof'" (Matt. vi. 34). As the greatest and most consolatory truths are liable to abuse, so we admit

Did a child
of God ever
fail?

such a glorious Scripture may be, and is, grossly perverted; but this is no reason why a dear child of God should relinquish his right of participation in what is clearly and definitely intended for him. Because gold is counterfeited, are sovereigns no longer to be the current coin of the realm? Shall we take no medicine because some is spurious? Shall we discard all bread on account of certain adulterations? We repeat, the more blessed the promise, the more open to perversion, because of Satan's jealousy and craft.

Reader, we are as sure as we are of our own existence, that every poor sensible sinner who has been brought by the Holy Ghost to know, and feel, and acknowledge himself as such, and who is simply looking to Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life, shall never be deceived nor disappointed. He shall feel the cleansing virtue of His sin-atoning blood, and the completeness and perfection of His righteousness to cover His poor naked soul. He shall see His delivering hand, feel His sustaining power, and

God a be the subject of His providential care
 faithful God. and keeping all the passage of the
 wilderness; and at last, in the Jordan
 or in the valley of the shadow of death, he shall feel
 that "the everlasting arms are underneath," and
 His blessed presence so vouchsafed as that he shall
 "fear no evil" (Psa. xxiii. 4).

We repeat, believer, that we have no more doubt of these sacred scriptural verities than we have of our own existence. Our present feelings, or the mere

estimate of poor frail and fallen flesh and blood, has nothing whatever to say to the matter. "We walk by *faith*, not by sight" (2 Cor. v. 7):

"Could we *see* how all were right,
Where were room for credence?
'Tis by faith, and not by sight,
Christians learn obedience."

Reader, let us conclude by quoting one of the ten thousand illustrations that might be given. Since we commenced this paper, we called upon a dear Christian and deeply-tried friend, who said that, on Christmas Day last, a dear old disciple of upwards of threescore years and ten made one of the family party at dinner; and, in the afternoon, she not only joined the juniors of the household in singing many precious hymns, but testified much and gratefully of the Lord's goodness to her during her long and eventful life. She had suddenly been bereft of her husband, since whose death she had kept a little school; and what with parish-pay, and half-a-crown a week allowed her by two nephews, she had managed to get on very well. But, as she was walking home that night, leaning upon the arm of our friend, she said, "Oh, how Satan tries me! He does put such things into my mind; and he says, 'Ah, what will you do by-and-by when this little help fails, and when you fall sick, and have nobody to wait upon you?' I said, 'Get thee behind me, Satan; ye tried to tempt my Master.'" *On the following Sunday*, not coming down-stairs as usual, a friend went up

Example of
triumph in a
dying hour.

to her room, and found her drowsy and breathing rather heavily; but, upon having a cup of tea given her and being asked how she was, she said she was very well. One of her nephews came, and, not being satisfied with appearances, fetched a doctor, who at once said she was sinking. The dear nephew (though a man with a large family, and thus having other claims) remained with her; and, laying himself down upon the outside of the bed, so as instantly to respond to any want she might express, he closely watched over the dear departing saint. She was in no pain; she had no fear; all was peace. "*I shall soon be over the river,*" said she; and, shortly after, giving just one gasp, she was gone to be "for ever with the Lord." Reader, this took place upon the borders of this parish on the first Sunday in this year. The dear saint's name was Humphrey.

Blessed, blessed be God for His divine faithfulness; blessed, blessed be a triune Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for a salvation that is as complete, and as full and free, as the eternal Trinity could render it.

Reader, may the Lord the Spirit make it your mercy, and increasingly ours also, to exclaim, "Who hath delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that He will *yet* deliver us!"

A PROTECTION AND PROVISION THAT HAS NEVER FAILED.

"I have been young, and now am old; YET have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (PSALM xxxvii. 25).

BLESSED John Newton used to say that experience was the key to open many of the mysteries of the Scriptures. The same idea of personal knowledge and personal observation is fraught with much comfort and satisfaction, as so confirming and establishing the word of God. Moreover, it gives such strength and tone to the testimony. Mark, in proof, the statement of the psalmist, as being distinct from and far above mere hearsay. "I," he says, "have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

Reader, this is a blessed testimony for God and truth. Moreover, we believe it to be one which will bear the very strictest, closest, and most searching inquiry. Yea, we are sure the deeper the scrutiny the more fully shall the truth be ratified and confirmed, that the Lord never has forsaken, nor will He ever forget His people. The covenant into which He entered with Jacob is precisely that into which He has likewise entered with Jacob's seed. "Behold, I am with thee," said Jehovah, "and will keep thee in all

**A Divine
pledge.**

places whither thou goest" (Gen. xxviii. 15). The reader will observe that the word "*places*" is in italics, and, consequently, is supplied, as not being in the original. Hence the keeping includes, not only all places, but all times and all circumstances. Provision, therefore, is an absolute necessity as involved in the gracious covenant engagement of a covenant God.

The reader, moreover, will do well to consider the omniscience and omnipresence, as well as the omnipotency, of Jehovah. When He pledged Himself to Jacob, and to all Jacob's seed in and after him, He did so in the fullest, most supernatural, and infinitely comprehensive foreview of all that the

patriarch and his posterity would require. There was not a single position in which a solitary member of the whole elect household of faith could be placed, nor the veriest necessity of which such member would be the subject, that was not foreseen and provided against in the eternal purpose and loving pleasure of Jehovah. It was this which led the psalmist in his day so gratefully to exclaim, "Although my house be not so with God, yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow" (2 Sam. xxiii. 5).

Believer, the fact is full of richest consolation, that there is no afterthought with our God; that He eternally saw the end from the beginning. He lives,

as it were, and ever did live, in one eternal *now*. All events stand fully developed to His own eternal mind ; and (blessed be His name !) He “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will ; none dare stay His hand, nor say, What doest Thou ?” (Dan. iv. 35). If the reader would have proof of this comprehensive foreview of the eternal God, let him contemplate it as exhibited to Abraham, when He said to him, “Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them ; and they shall afflict them four hundred years ; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge : and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace ; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again : for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full” (Gen. xv. 13—16). See this foreknowledge also wondrously displayed in the revelation made to Moses, to whom, after the Lord had declared His pleasure to send him to Pharaoh, as Israel’s deliverer, He said, “And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof : and after that he will let you go” (Exod. iii. 19, 20).

Israel’s captivity fore-
shown.

Mark, moreover, dear reader, this foreknowledge of God as manifested in and by His servants the prophets. Take an example with regard to Israel’s being

brought into captivity by the king of Babylon, and, after a definite period, being delivered from his tyrannizing sway. "This whole land," says Jehovah

Israel's
deliverance
declared.

by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah, "shall be a desolation and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy

years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations" (Jer. xxv. 11, 12). Now, how literally was this fulfilled, as seen in the closing up of the second book of Chronicles!

We have dwelt for a moment upon these facts, dear reader, simply for the purpose of stating that, as Jehovah has literally fulfilled His word in regard to the past, so He will as literally fulfil His word

Future events
known
to God.

with respect to the future! If He foresaw what would from time to time occur, ages upon ages before such occurrences; so with equal precision and

with a corresponding identity shall all that the Lord hath spoken in reference to the future come to pass. There is not the shadow of a doubt about it; and here it behoves the Lord's people to "be still and know that He is God, for He will be exalted among the heathen; He will be exalted in the earth" (Ps. xlv. 10).

But, with respect to the special care and kindly provision of Jehovah as vouchsafed to His people, there is a sweet and most consolatory testimony

given in the 32nd chapter of Deuteronomy: "For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him" (v. 9—12). How precious is the contemplation that this so large and comprehensive a statement has, from that moment to the present, been so graciously and so literally fulfilled. The preservation of the Lord, and the provision by the Lord, for and on the behalf of His people, is a matter, dear reader, that may well affect our cold and thankless hearts. "Oh, Israel," He says, "thou shalt not be forgotten of me" (Isa. xlv. 21); and sure we are it is an incontrovertible truth—an eternal verity. Never, never was one of the Lord's dear children, under any circumstances, over-looked or forsaken by Him. On the contrary, any trial or affliction, privation or sorrow, has only, so to speak, prompted the Lord to come forth on their behalf, in the rich and blessed exercise of His wisdom, love, and power. Oh, how true is the word which closes that beautiful epitome of Jehovah's dealings with His Church and people, the 107th psalm: "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord!"

Divine
remembrance.

"I have been young, and now am old," says the psalmist. Hence his testimony is personal as well as relative. He had for himself experienced and

Personal
experience
undeniable.

enjoyed the things of which he spoke.

This we know to be true, inasmuch

as the Lord has graciously left upon

record such ample proof and evidence

of the genuineness and reality of His leadings and dealings with His servant. Whose history was more

rich in illustration of the watchful eye, the bountiful provision, the special interest of the Lord Jehovah,

than that of the psalmist? No man could speak more

pointedly and definitely than David. Oh, reader,

what a mercy is this! No sophistries of men, no

craftiness of Satan, can succeed long together in deny-

ing or arguing men out of what their eyes have seen

and their hands have handled of the word of life.

That which they have seen and heard they declare ;

such testimony, grounded as it is upon the Spirit's

opening, savingly and experimentally, of the things

which God hath prepared for them that love Him, is

both weighty and undeniable. "We cannot but

speak," said the disciples Peter and John, "the

things which we have seen and heard" (Acts. iv. 20).

Moreover, as we have said, the psalmist's testi-

mony was not only personal, but

The marked

relative. Hence he adds to his own

provision of

personal experience the significant "yet"

God's people.

—"yet have I not seen the righteous

forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Therefore

what he *saw* was in perfect unison with what he had

proved. And this is undoubtedly substantiated by plain matter of fact. The Lord does care for His people. He preserves them and He provides for them in a most wonderful way. They are objects of His ceaseless kindness and compassion; and we believe it will be part of the blessed employment of heaven to review and retrace Jehovah's wondrous dealings on earth. Then, under a clearer light and a purer intelligence, shall be seen and felt matters and mercies which, in our present poor and imperfect state, our little contracted minds fail to perceive, and our cold and thankless hearts fail to feel.

There are times, however, even now, when in the saints' occasional meeting on pilgrimage through this vale of tears, they are lost in adoring wonder and amazement as they unitedly compare notes, and commune one with the other upon the marvellously-interposing hand and kind and gracious provision of our God, illustrating and confirming, as such conferences do, the psalmist's blessed testimony, "I have been young, and now am old; *yet* have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

The Lord's own dear people are oftentimes fed and nourished in a wonderful way. Human wisdom and creature help not unfrequently fail, in order that the Lord's own special way of providing and sustaining and upholding should in the more marked and conclusive manner be seen and acknowledged. The Lord does thus, so to speak, take matters out of man's hands significantly and condescendingly into His own. Dear reader, have *you* ever known this personally

and experimentally? Have you ever been in positions and so hampered by circumstances that, if the Lord had not appeared in
Appeal to the reader.

His own loving, timely, and tender way, you know not what would have been the consequence? Perhaps your position has been such that you could not make it known to a creature. The dearest friend on earth has been to you, in this respect, as a stranger and an alien. You could not—no, not even if your very life had been at stake—discover to such what was pent up in your own heart. It was a secret between God and your own soul. You could sigh and cry before Him, and Him alone. You could breathe out in bitter tears and sighs and groans that which, for very weight and anguish, bore you down, as it were, to the very earth. Throwing off as you might have endeavoured to do one moment before your fellow-creature the weight and the care and the worm-like gnawing at your very heart; yet, the next moment when loosed from that creature, oh how intense has been the wrestling and the groaning and the beseeching and the importuning at the mercy-seat! Oh, how sweet that word, “*Thou hast known my soul in adversities*” (Ps. xxxi. 7). Ah, yes, who has known it as God has known it?

The only resource. And, in spite of all the sorrow and the pain and the agonizing weight, how sweet even then has been the consciousness that *the Lord* knew! How sweet to feel, if all other doors were closed—all other helps failing—all other hearts sealed up; yet, yet there has been

One door opened still; One channel not closed;
One ear ready still to hearken; One heart always
prepared to sympathize! Yes, in the absence of all
creature-helps and creature-hopes, how sweet the
love-look, the soothing whisper, the timely helping
hand of Jesus!" Ah, what a Brother He! what a
Friend He! what a loving, gracious, tender Bene-
factor He!

"Earthly friends may fail and leave us,
But this Friend will ne'er forsake us.
Oh, how He loves!"

Touching upon communion with the brethren, be-
loved, and conferences one with the other upon the
part of the Lord's pilgrims, we re-
cently were privileged with a personal **A remarkable**
interview with one whom from time **case.**
to time, during the last five-and-twenty years, we
have occasionally visited upon her sick-bed. Nine-
and-twenty years ago last March the sorely-afflicted
sister ("R. S.") left her situation with £8 in her
pocket, to take to the bed of pain and languishing
which she has from that time occupied. Three-fourths
of that sum went into the doctor's hands. She has
been the child of Providence ever since! And, not-
withstanding the ravages of disease, her countenance
appears to us to be brighter now than it did twenty
years ago. We were astounded as we contemplated
her perfect contentment and her entire resignation to
the will of God. There appeared not the semblance
of impatience, nor the veriest wish that the days of
her mourning should be ended. And oh, what scenes

has she passed through in that nine-and-twenty years! During one part of her illness, it was laid upon her heart to take a certain tried one out of the poorhouse to come and nurse her. The words pressing upon her were, "Take this child and nurse her for me." The idea seemed preposterous; a greater absurdity it appeared there could not be. She herself a daily pensioner upon Divine bounty to incur all the wants and the necessities which a second would involve! Upon merely human grounds, such an act were presumptuous indeed! And yet she could not abandon what was thus laid upon her heart. It was a matter for *faith* alone! The creature would condemn! Human advisers negative in a moment! The throne of grace was her only resource. There, and there alone, the matter must be settled. And there, after intense importunity, and argument after argument pleaded only to be silenced as God alone can silence, the matter *was* settled. From the workhouse the poor creature was brought; and, according to "R. S.'s" own testimony, when she came, there was, as a matter of certainty, but half-a-crown a week to support the two! But now—mark, dear child of God—listen, ye poor, calculating, callous-hearted critics (if we happen to address such) *from that moment the supply was doubled!* and that, too, not from any appeal to the Divine faithfulness. creature—not from any application to man; for it was God's work, and worthy of a God, from first to last. For seven years, lacking three months, were they thus mutually helped and sup-

plied and delivered ! But, for the last year or thereabouts, the nurse fell sick, and required a nurse in turn. At length she died ; and the same God who had so kindly and tenderly supplied in life, in the self-same way provided in death. Still, without any appeal to man, the *exact sum* required for the deceased one's burial was sent ; and thus the Lord added to the ten thousand times ten thousand instances that might be recorded, and which are noted down in heaven's register, in proof of the grand and glorious declaration, " I have been young, and now am old ; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

MY LAST RESOLVE AND REFUGE.

"Other refuge have I none:
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, ah! leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me."

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him"
(JOB xiii. 15).

THIS was the last Scripture audibly expressed by the late much-beloved and deeply-lamented Earl of RODEN. It was a glorious passage with which to meet the last enemy, and to grasp by precious faith whilst in the very passage of the Jordan. What could more fully bespeak personal, heartfelt, experimental knowledge, according to that portion, "And they that *know* Thy name will put their trust in Thee; for Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee" (Psalm ix. 10). Nor what more express a thorough satisfaction with both the Lord and His dealings? It clearly implies neither wish nor will to look elsewhere for help.

May the Lord, dear reader, enable us at this time to dive somewhat into the depths of this blessed portion. And, first, let us remember the many, many thousands—yea, myriads upon myriads—of immortal souls by whom it has been adopted; and yet never, in one solitary instance, spoken in vain! Each and all have proved the sterling

Scripture
arguments
always
availing.

value and the divinely-sustaining power involved in the language. Not one has found the words deceptive or valueless; but, on the contrary, in proportion as by grace divine they have been enabled to adopt and adhere to them, in that very proportion have they found their true consolatory, cheering, and strengthening power.

Beloved, these words were uttered by Job; and we know how deeply-tried and sorely-exercised a man Job was. Nay, the very language implies it. It bespeaks test and trouble of no ordinary kind. It presupposes the cutting off of all creature strength and all fleshly resources. There is nowhere to look in a human point of view. The language of the Psalmist is most suitable for such a condition, "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul" (Psalm cxlii. 4). Under the figure of battling with the mighty ocean, the Psalmist again represents such a state, "They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end" (Psalm cvii. 26, 27). Reader, do you know anything of this? Have you been brought here? Have all your creature-props and human dependencies given way? Has every resource failed? —each dearly-treasured hope and expectation had to be resigned? Is all gone? Is there nought left? Has it become a total blank as far as all you had

Spiritual
conflict.

looked to and calculated upon, in a merely natural or human sense, is concerned? and are you left barren destitute, desolate indeed? Oh, we seem to hear some poor, tried, sin-burdened, Satan-harassed soul exclaim, "Ah, 'tis my state and condition indeed. 'My hope is perished from the Lord;' yea, it is questionable if ever I had a really well-grounded, true Gospel hope, or wherefore should it thus fail?" Beloved, the more closely you examine the exercises and the experience of Job, the more clearly will you trace out this very state of things as strictly applicable to his condition and circumstances. Although a great and good man, there was much in the character of Job, of which, to say the least, he was comparatively unconscious until the Lord, in His own special and most effectual way, revealed it unto him. The ordeal by which Job was ultimately to arrive at that knowledge subjected him to a course of the most trying and painful discipline. It was by no merely superficial process Job was brought so to change his views of himself and his proceedings, as instead of saying, as he does, even in the words

immediately connected with our text,
 Job's "But I will maintain mine own ways
 self-will. before Him," to exclaim, "Behold, I
 am vile: what shall I answer Thee? I will lay
 mine hand upon my mouth" (Job xl. 4). How
 striking the contrast is the foregoing, and equally
 so is another twofold utterance of the patriarch,
 "Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and
 I desire to reason with God" (Job xiii. 3), and

"Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. . . . I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job xlii. 3, 5, 6).

Reader, we repeat, it is by no mere trivial or superficial process a poor finite creature is brought thus to alter his tone and change his views. Which is *your* present language, reader, the first or the last? the proud, the self-sufficient, the pharisaical? or the humble, the contrite, the self-abhorrent? Ah, what a mercy to be brought down! what a mercy to be laid low! what a mercy to feel, as before a heart-searching, rein-trying God, a personal and practical sympathy with such utterances as that of good old Jacob, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage" (Gen. xlvii. 9); or, with the zealous Ezra, "And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God, and said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered

True godly
contrition.

into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day. And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in His holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage" (Ezra ix. 5—8); or the ardent Daniel, "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments: neither have we hearkened unto Thy servants the prophets, which spake in Thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither Thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against Thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against Thee" (Dan. ix. 5—8).

Reader, we repeat, it is a rich and distinguishing mercy to be brought down into the very dust of self-nothingness. The reducing process (so to speak) is, we admit, anything but pleasing or agreeable to poor proud human nature, which is sure to kick and rebel at the means which the Lord may see fit to employ for accomplishing so merciful and gracious an end;

but, ah! when accomplished—when the poor sinner is at length laid low under the tender hand and fatherly discipline of Him who loves him ten thousand times more than he loves himself—how sweet and how blessed it is! Considering that he was passing through a dangerous world, and, in his high and exalted position as a king, perpetually exposed to snares and entanglements, we believe that the Psalmist was never more to be envied than when he “went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up” (2 Sam. xv. 30); and, when he afterwards exclaimed, with respect to the cursings of Shimei, “It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day” (2 Sam. xvi. 12). How strikingly in contrast this language of David to that expressed with regard to Nabal, as given in 1 Sam. xxv. 21, 22! The like feeling of true penitential sorrow, brokenness, and humility, is expressed by the prophet Micah (see chap. vii. 9): “I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold His righteousness.”

Now observe, dear reader, that it is when the hearts of the Lord's dear people are thus brought down,

under the precious ministry and divine power of the Holy Ghost, when they are thus led by Him, in some little measure, to see and feel themselves to be what they really are—from these depths spring hope,

and love, and prayer, and childlike confidence. It is thus, when killed to all creature trust or dependence or fancied worthiness, that new life is infused into them. It is thus, when humbled, they

are exalted; when brought low, they are helped. Yea, it is out of these deep depths—under the crushing weight of sin or care or anguish or anxiety—when, it may be, “the enemy is indeed coming in like a flood,” and bringing all the powers of darkness to bear upon the poor shattered, tempest-tossed soul, that hope revives, new life and vigour and a Godlike trust are realized. It is then, and not until then, such poor harassed and Satan-assaulted ones exclaim, “Although He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,” as much as to say, “Suggest what you may, Satan; insinuate the very worst; talk of the most dreadful and hopeless of consequences; set before me my sins and transgressions in all their heinous and abominable light; tell me, as well you may, that I have sinned against light and love, against adoption and holy privilege; declare, as justly you may declare, that none deserve the vengeance of eternal fire as *I* deserve it; still, still, ‘though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.’ Although the sword of Divine Indignation sever my corrupt head from this my sin-defiled body, if that sword pierce to my very heart’s core.—still, still,

‘though He *slay* me, yet will I trust in Him.’ ”
 And why? First, what else can a poor sin-burdened, devil-harassed soul do? That was a never-to-be-forgotten reply of Peter to the momentous question of his loved and loving Lord, “Will ye also go away?”
 “Lord,” said he, “to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (John vi. 67—69).

May we not pause, and here ask very many of our beloved readers, that, dissatisfied as they are about their present state and condition—unable, as perhaps they are, to declare their belief in their own personal and imperishable interest Appeal
to the reader.
 in the salvation of Jesus—yet they are, and long have been, brought to the most thorough conviction of the truth and reality of that blessed testimony, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts iv. 12). Ay, and such are brought—and long, it may be, have been brought—to a holy resolution—a calm, deliberate, God-inspired determination—to perish (if they must perish) at the foot of the cross. Such sympathize, and most deeply too, with the utterance of Esther of old, “So will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish” (Esther iv. 16).

“I can but perish if I go,
 I am resolved to try;
 For if I stay away, I know
 I must for ever die.

“But can I die with mercy sought,
When I the King have tried?
This were to die (delightful thought!)
As sinner never died.”

But, secondly, with respect to this *trust*, and that, too, under apparently the most hopeless and destructive of circumstances, even death, or, in other words, the utter cutting off and annihilating of all creature-hopes or human prospects; death—an absolute death—upon every fleshly, earthly, or merely natural desire or expectation. A total failure; a positively-hopeless condition; the die seemingly cast; the doom apparently fixed. “Though He *slay* me, yet will I trust in Him.” Now let us look at the ground of the trust—the motive or the reason for “against hope believing in hope” (Rom. iv. 18). We have already briefly referred to Jacob’s season of wrestling. Now, what was one of the chief grounds of his wrestling? It was the *promise* of God. “And Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude” (Gen. xxxii. 12). Here was his strong-

hold—here his heaven-fetched argument—here his irresistible plea. As much as reverently to say, “Thou didst volunteer the promise; Thou wast beforehand with me; I was in the dark, Thou in the light; what was perfectly hidden from me, stood naked and open to Thee; and, in the full foreview of all that I should be, and all the after-developments of my frail life, Thou didst pledge Thyself, ‘Thou saidst, I will surely do Thee good.’ Nor canst Thou

lie, nor forget Thy word, nor forsake the work of Thine own hands; for 'God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?' (Num. xxiii. 19). Moreover, if I am to die—if my angry brother is to carry out his intentions respecting me—if my life by his hand is thus suddenly to be cut short, what becomes of Thy word? How can Thy promise be fulfilled? How is my seed to become as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude?"

Ah, reader, these are blessed arguments; this is a divine mode of reasoning. This is holding God to His word—putting Him to the test—approaching Him in the way in which He is well pleased to be approached; for He loves to be reminded of His own word; He delights to be pleaded with; He says, in a way of gracious and most condescending exhortation, "Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob" (Isa. xli. 21). "Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified" (Isa. xliii. 26).

This line of things may appear presumptuous and unwarrantable to a merely nominal professor; but it is, notwithstanding, part and parcel of that blessed "secret which is with them that fear Him, and to whom He will shew His covenant" (Ps. xxv. 14). The Lord does bring His people from time to time into positions, and so familiarize them with straits

and difficulties, or so compasses them about with perplexed paths, that Himself—and none but Himself—can extricate them therefrom. They are compelled, from necessity, to “cease from man.” The creature, however kind and sympathizing and generous his intentions, is powerless. It is the Lord, God alone and the Lord alone, can help. From our Helper. veriest necessity, the poor perplexed and deeply-tried and sorely-harassed one exclaims, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth” (Psalm cxxi. 1, 2).

Reader, do *you* know anything of this experience? Have you been brought into circumstances, or are you in them, wherein the Lord—and only the Lord—can sustain and deliver? Oh, then, be it your mercy, in a truly spiritual and Gospel sense, to “fight neither with small nor great, save only with the King of Israel” (1 Kings xxii. 31). Go to the Lord, and the Lord only. You may think it is necessary to appeal to man—to make known to man, as best you can, what you feel and what you fear. Ah, thus to seek guidance and help from the creature is vain.

He is but a poor short-sighted worm
 Resort to the of the earth in common with yourself.
 throne, and The Lord the Spirit prompt you and
 plead the enable you to betake yourself simply
 blood. and singly to the throne of grace. Be

plain *there*; ply the promises *there*; persevere *there*; go again and again and again *there*. The Lord help thee so to do! Don't be dismayed. Take no refusal.

Go as a poor sinner. Confess thy vileness, thine ill-and-hell-deservedness. Plead the blood; stick to the blood; base every plea and every argument upon the blood, as washing and cleansing from all sin and putrefaction, and as making thee, the most uncomely of sinners, clean and white and most comely in His sight who declared, "And when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exod. xii. 13).

How little idea has a merely-nominal religionist or professor of what really goes on between a deeply-tried and exercised believer and his God. Could such at times be overheard in their midnight cries and closet-wrestlings at the throne of grace, the listener would be astounded. It would be deemed the very height of presumption; and yet such pleaders could not—durst not—say what they say, nor do as they do, but for divine prompting and enabling. It would have been a matter of positive inability for Abraham to have wrestled as he did in the plains of Mamre, if so be divine power had not been put forth within him. See, reader, that wonderful 18th chapter of Genesis. Equally impossible would it have been for Jacob to have adhered to his purpose as he did by the brook Jabbok, if so be the Lord had not stood by him and prompted him as He did. It was the Lord, so to speak, fighting himself with His own weapons; plying Himself with His own arguments. Without this the patriarch neither could nor would have so remonstrated with God, nor resolved not to be denied. (See Gen. xxxii.) The same remark holds good with respect to the position in which Moses again

and again was placed in regard to Israel. Mark, for example, what passed between Jehovah and Moses ere yet the Lord began to deliver His people, as seen at the close of the 5th and the commencement of the 6th chapters of Exodus. See likewise Moses' wonderful intercession on Israel's behalf in connexion with the molten calf which they made and fell down and worshipped, whilst yet Moses was upon the mount, in close contact with God. How could Moses have used such language as he did, if so be God had not put the words in his mouth: "And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people, which Thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants, to whom Thou swarest by Thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever" (Exod. xxxii. 11—13). Now, had the Lord been angry with Moses, or had it been otherwise than we have intimated, namely, that the Lord Himself was the Wrestler and the Pleader in and by Moses, would it have been directly stated, that "the Lord repented of the evil which He thought

to do unto His people?" Moreover, in this position as Pleader, was not Moses a beautiful and a blessed type of Him who was indeed, in the fulness of time, to intercede for His people, and who was perpetually to appear before the throne as the Advocate of His brethren? Again, see how Moses remonstrated with the Lord upon His threatening to destroy Israel: "Then the Egyptians shall hear it (for Thou broughtest up this people in Thy might from among them); and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that Thou, Lord, art among this people, that Thou, Lord, art seen face to face, and that Thy cloud standeth over them, and that Thou goest before them, by daytime in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if Thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of Thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which He swore unto them, therefore He hath slain them in the wilderness. And now, I beseech Thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as Thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. Pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of Thy mercy, and as Thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. And the Lord said, I have pardoned, according to Thy word" (Numb. xiv. 13—20).

Oh, what marvellous grace was this, dear reader! and we are really at a loss which most to admire, the

Divine Lord's condescending goodness and
condescension. mercy in thus filling His servant's
mouth with arguments thus to plead
before Him, or His tender compassion and divine
faithfulness in so promptly giving heed to Moses' intercession, and declaring "I have pardoned, *according to Thy word.*" It is so evident that the Lord placed Himself here, as elsewhere, in a position on purpose that He might be overcome and prevailed upon by His servant. Without this, Moses, and every poor helpless sinner in common with him, would be crushed before Jehovah as a moth!

Observe, dear reader, the like irresistible entreaty upon the part of Joshua, when Israel was again in jeopardy about the matter of the Babylonish garment: "And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast Thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan! O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name? And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" (Joshua vii. 7—10.) Mark, again, the self-same holy importunity upon the part of the prophet Elijah, in regard to the widow's son: "And he cried

unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, hast Thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? And he stretched himself upon the child three times, ^{Elijah} and cried unto the Lord, and said, O ^{wrestling with} Lord my God, I pray Thee, let this child's soul come into him again" (1 Kings xvii. 20, 21). What a wondrous request was that, "I pray Thee, let this child's soul come into him again!" Oh, when divinely inspired, it is surprising what the Lord's children from time to time ask at His hands—such mercies and such favours and such love-tokens as would astound a novice at the throne of grace, or a mere formal worshipper. The children now and then know what it is to go before God as a Father, and to plead with Him as such. They are privileged at times, under the precious prompting of the Holy Ghost, to feel and act upon the testimony,

"Thou art coming to a King,
Large petitions with thee bring."

They at such seasons feel the force and the blessedness of Jesus' words, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John xvi. 24).

We might still further multiply examples, and show how the Lord *in* His people as well as *for* His people, "pleads their cause" (Prov. xxii. 23). Let the foregoing, however, suffice. Do they not, dear reader, exhibit that holy determination and that blessed resolve which prompted Job to exclaim,

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him?"

In each case there was a knowledge of God—a personal experimental acquaintance with Him, and a familiarity with His merciful and gracious dealings. This was a further ground upon which the determination was based. There was not only a knowledge of the character of God, as revealed in His word, and a knowledge likewise of His promises; but there was, in addition to this twofold knowledge, a personal experimental familiarity with His ways and works. This brings out that blessed utterance which we before quoted, "Thou hast *known* my soul in adversities."

Now, dear reader, permit us again to ask, Is this *your* case? We do not wish to deal in theory simply, or in mere dry doctrine, however important and essential it may be in its place; but we want to come to the heart-work—to the personal, individual home-and-heart knowledge of the matter. What do we *know* of it? What have we personally *proved*? What have we individually *tasted* and *handled* and *felt* of these things? Have we been in the depths, or are we even now in them? and is the heart and eye up to the Lord, and the Lord alone? Do we know, indeed, and of a truth, that "vain is the help of man?" Are we looking higher? contending with the Holier? pleading with Him who alone sees and hears and knows all? Oh, blessed times these, dear reader, when we can "set the Lord always before us, and feel that, because He is at our right hand, we shall

not be moved" (Psalm xvi. 8). Blessed, when we can reason with Him and remonstrate with Him, not merely upon what He has said, but likewise upon what He has done. "Hast Thou spoken to me as Thou hast—promised me what Thou didst—led me and fed me thus far, to forego Thy purpose, to forfeit Thy promise, and forsake Thy servant, after all?"

"What! after so much mercy past,
Canst Thou let me sink at last?"

That be far from Thee!

Reader, in going before the Throne with Job's words in thy mouth, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," take with thee the treble F as a ground of argument:—

Wilt Thou *Forego* Thy purpose?

Wilt Thou *Forfeit* Thy promise?

Wilt Thou *Forsake* Thy servant?

And the Lord, for His great name's sake, not only make Thee a wrestling Jacob, but a prevailing Israel!

Practical
suggestion.

THE PSALMIST'S ASTONISHMENT AND ADMIRATION.

"And this was yet a small thing in Thy sight, O Lord God; but Thou hast spoken also of Thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" (2 SAM. vii. 19.)

BELOVED, there is some precious teaching connected with the "yet" above mentioned. May the Holy Ghost, at this time, be pleased mercifully to shine upon His word, and so influence and operate upon our hearts, that we may learn from what is here set before us!

And, first, let us observe, dear reader, the Psalmist's position. We read in the opening of the chapter, that "the king sat in his house." How very little do we find throughout the whole eventful life of David of his being in similar circumstances! We meet him continually in a state of excitement, or conflict, or suspense; but so unfrequently in *quiet* or at *ease*. Oh, is not this significant of life in general? of our real condition whilst on pilgrimage through a waste howling wilderness? How much there is, beloved, to remind us that "*this is not our rest; it is polluted!*" But, in connexion with this position of the Psalmist, it is stated, "And the Lord had given him rest round about from

all his enemies." Reader, mark this, for it is well worthy of note: "*The Lord* had given him rest." Now we read that in the midst of his many conflicts, and encompassed as he so continually was by such numerous enemies, how anxiously and ardently David sought to free himself from those conflicts, or either to set himself right with or rid himself of those enemies: but all such efforts were vain and futile. Every merely human or fleshly endeavour upon the part of the Psalmist only intensified the conflict, or rendered his foes more malignant. And why so? Because, first, the Lord would thus open to his mind the real nature and desperate wickedness of the human heart; and, secondly, that He should reserve to Himself, both as to time and means, either the subduing that heart or the removal of the enemy. Then, as a blessed fruit and consequence, the Lord secured to Himself the glory of His own wisdom, way, and work. Ah, reader, it is very blessed to be brought at length to that glorious climax, however long or distressing or flesh-and-blood mortifying the ordeal through which we are called in order to its attainment, "and the Lord had given him rest." Do you know anything of it, reader? or are you in the midst of the warfare, fighting and contending—fretting and fuming—both against God and man? How sweet, on the contrary, to be brought down—to be laid low—yea, in the very dust of nothingness and self-loathing before God!

It is the Lord
who giveth
rest.

Beloved, we have been thinking very much of late of a threefold position spoken of in the word of God; the first, where Israel is commanded to “*stand still and see the salvation of God*” (Exod.

xiv. 13); the next, the counsel given by Naomi to Ruth, “*Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall; for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day*” (Ruth iii. 18); the last, and most desirable and enviable position of all, is that spoken of by Jehovah Himself in the 46th Psalm, “*Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.*” This last state describes the condition of those who are laid low—thoroughly prostrated—under the afflictive hand of God; brought into the circumstances of one who having through a long life been very active in the Lord’s service, is at length laid aside, and to whom, as one reminded her, “The Lord is now saying to you, *Lie still and cough.*” Ah, how little do such sufferers see what is involved in the *passive* as well as in the *active* service. Wellington’s difficulty at Waterloo was in *restraining* his men: it was easier to him, and far more pleasing to them, when, in regard to the last grand charge of the enemy, he exclaimed, “Up, guards, and at them!” But it was the previous stillness and watchfulness and waiting, had as much or more to say to the victory than the last actual fighting. Reader, although each position denotes the work and express leading and teaching of the Holy Ghost, the last—the *being still*—

bespeaks so much of the refining and reducing process as to illustrate that favourite Scripture of ours, "He brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help" (Psalm cvii. 12). This, sooner or later, leads to the experimental response to the Lord's own exhortation, "*Be still and know that I am God;*" and then all such shall blessedly see, "He will work, and who shall let (or hinder) it?" (Isa. xliii. 13). Then comes the blessed realization of the words before us, "The Lord had given him rest;" and all such resting ones shall testify, "This is the Lord's doings, and it is marvellous in our eyes" (Psalm cxviii. 23). Ah, reader, this is a realization worth wrestling, waiting, and watching for.

But we have further teaching in respect to Nathan, who said to David, with regard to his discomfort about the ark of God dwelling within curtains, whilst he himself dwelt in a house of cedar, "Go, do all that is in thine heart, for the Lord is with thee." Now, remembering that Nathan was a prophet of the Lord, this proves that men—even the best and most highly privileged—have but partial light, and only a very limited knowledge of the mind and will of God. And how condemnatory is this of the idea that some men are to be looked up to and consulted as being invested with a knowledge or a power from which guidance or strength is to be derived. Jehovah is too jealous of His glory and of the honour due to His great and adorable name to en-

Not man, but
God, to be
looked to.

trust any man with that which shall enable him to assume or arrogate to himself any wisdom or power that should possess him, either on his own account, or on behalf of others, with the shadow of a shade of independence of God. Man, be he minister or one to be ministered unto, be he teacher or taught, is in himself and of himself nought but a poor, sinful, corrupt worm of the earth, dependent for every breath he draws upon that Almighty One in whom he lives, and moves, and has his being. Dangerous, then, and destructive to the last degree are those priestly or proud pretensions which are, alas ! but too common in the days in which we live.

But to return. There was on the part of Nathan what is too prevalent with us, namely, a taking things for granted. Upon the surface of matters, and seeing that the desire on the part of David was so laud-

Why David
was not
allowed to
build the
temple.

able, and he being withal so godly a man, the prophet came to the hasty conclusion that the Psalmist was prompted of God to do that which was so uppermost in his heart ; but in what a very different light did the Lord Himself view matters. Now, in one place the reason assigned for David's not being permitted to build the temple is, that he " had shed blood abundantly, and had made great wars " (1 Chron. xxii. 8). But in the chapter before us there is another reason given, and that is most gracious. " It came to pass that night, that the word of the Lord came unto Nathan, saying, Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith

the Lord, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in? whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle" (2 Sam. vii. 4—6). Here, then, reader, is the so special and peculiar mercy, that the Lord by this very language declares His ever-constant presence with His people. It is such a blessed confirmation of the promise to Jacob—"And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" (Gen. xxviii. 15):—and to Moses, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Exod. xxxiii. 14). How confirmatory, moreover, of that gracious testimony, "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old" (Isa. lxiii. 9). Reader, what a marvellous and how condescending a declaration is that—"have walked in a tent and a tabernacle," indicating the Lord's interest in His people, and His identity with them; His fighting their battles, bearing their burdens, and sharing their sorrows; He Himself in a state of unrest whilst they were on pilgrimage; His very ordinances of worship partaking The Lord so of the temporary character—merely ever with His conducted in a tent or tabernacle, to people. indicate that Israel was *en route*—no settlement, no

abiding; why? because they were "not as yet come to the rest and the inheritance which the Lord their God had given them" (Deut. xii. 9). They were not at rest, nor would the Lord Himself be. And how sweet is the thought, beloved, that the self-same all-glorious truth still holds good! The Lord is with His people now as much as in olden times. He still walks with them and talks to them. They are not alone. They have not gone a warfare at their own charges. They are not called either to suffer or to serve of or by themselves. They have a companionship—a fellowship—a partnership—a brotherhood; and that so real and so near and dear as to outvie and surpass all natural relationship or human bonds. Oh, the companionship of Jesus, the fellowship of Jesus, the brotherhood of Jesus! "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 18). "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John xiv. 18). "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. iv. 15).

Oh, to realize yet more and more this fellowship—this partnership in trial and temptation, conflict and care! Jesus and ourselves one! one
Oneness with in nature; one in interest; one in ob-
Jesus. ject; one in prospect; one in eternal
 union and everlasting blessedness; one eternally and indissolubly; such a oneness and such an identity as is comprehended in those sweet Scriptures: "As He

is, so are we in this world " (1 John iv. 17). "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world " (John xvii. 16—18). "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me. And the glory which Thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me; for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee; but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent me; and I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them " (John xvii. 21—26). Reader, is not this oneness—is not this identity indeed? Oh, for more of the daily realization of it, so that thereby we may be instrumentally raised above self, and all the turmoil of the pathway! Oh, could we but see how much *the Lord* has at stake! Were it the pleasure of the Holy Ghost to give us a more abiding sense of how the Lord's own promise and power are involved in our being preserved unto the end, and

finally glorified, how would that very apprehension tend, under God, to divert us from our cares and perplexities, temptations and trials, and help us to that "stillness" under His hand to which we just now alluded! Oh, for more of that precious grace which enables the partaker to say, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good" (1 Sam. iii. 18). Lord, Lord, do vouchsafe to us this rich and distinguishing mercy; and yet, notwithstanding all that Thou hast been to us and for us, how we dread the means which Thou mayest see fit to adopt to bring us down to this state of soul! Lord, Lord, pity and pardon us, we pray Thee, for Christ's sake! Thou knowest our frame; Thou rememberest that we are but dust.

Observe, dear reader, how the Lord almost invariably, in connexion with fresh manifestations and renewed tokens of divine favour, leads back His people in review. His object evidently is to keep perpetually on their mind what He sees, alas! they are so prone to overlook and to forget, namely, all that He has been to and for them. "Now, therefore,

so shalt thou say unto my servant
Reviews and David, Thus saith the Lord of hosts,
retracings.

I took thee from the sheepte, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel: and I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth" (2 Sam. vii. 8, 9). We repeat that the Lord

sees how constantly His people lose sight of past mercies and past deliverances; how, in the all-absorbing influence of present trials and present difficulties, they regard not the past with its wondrous succour and interposition; hence He, as the Remembrancer, has so constantly to lead them back in special retracings and review. This is so emphatically the work of the Holy Ghost.

"I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep." Mark, reader, the "I." It was the Lord's doings, and that for a special purpose: "to be ruler over my people, over Israel." What a change! how great the contrast! And this to make it more significantly of God—to stamp it the more conspicuously as being the "Lord's doings." Ah, it is well to be led back, both temporally and spiritually, "to the rock whence we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence we were digged." Men of humble origin are too prone to wish to hide that origin, and thus to obscure and put out of sight the good and gracious providence and kind and merciful leadings of the Lord Jehovah. It was a striking trait in the character of a certain General that he never lost sight of his lowly origin, or of the reverence and respect due to his venerable father. Hence he is represented on one occasion as conducting along the front of the ranks of his troops, whilst drawn up in line, the aged countryman, in his simple smock-frock, leaning upon the arm of the noble-hearted commander. On the other hand, we remember as a youth hearing of a certain naval officer, who,

David's
origin.

being in company one day with sundry of his brother-officers, passed without recognition his venerable father, because humble-looking. We recollect this act being mentioned as the only known blot upon that officer's character. Reader, pride is that which is most hateful to God, and in His sight is among the most heinous of sins; and yet it is astonishing in what a varied way and how insidiously it works.

Moreover, as the Holy Ghost leads back the minds of His dear people in review of the past, so likewise He is graciously pleased to lead them onward in hope and expectation by the sealing home afresh His

Past and future. promises as bearing upon the inheritance He has in reserve. The reader will recollect, with respect to the distinct work and prerogative of the Holy Ghost, that

Jesus not only said, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance" (John xiv. 26), but He declared likewise of the self-same Divine and Almighty Person, "He will shew you things to come" (John xvi. 13).

Having called the attention of the Psalmist to where He had met him and what He had hitherto done for him, the Lord proceeds to say, "Moreover, I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, and as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the Lord telleth thee

that He will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever" (2 Sam. vii. 10—13).

Thus we see how the Lord ratifies and confirms His word, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi. 33). As much as to say, "Attend to *My* matters first, keep in view *My* kingdom and *My* glory, and rest assured I will not forget *you*." And this the Lord invariably does. None, strictly speaking, ever lose by Him, or on His account, aught that was worth retaining. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is and that which is to come" (1 Tim. iv. 8).

We would, however, dear reader, pause for a moment over that sweet expression, "When thy days shall be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers." Oh, how consolatory is this! How it illustrates that other Scripture, *All things well* "Is there not an appointed time for *and wisely* man upon earth?" (Job vii. 1.) Yes, *ordered.* verily, and all and every thing in rich and copious detail, beautifully and blessedly arranged for the good of the creature and the glory of Jehovah. Not the veriest circumstance, not the most minute event, we are most thoroughly persuaded, is overlooked in that

covenant which the Psalmist rejoiced in, and of which he testified as "ordered in *all* things and sure" (2 Sam. xxiii. 5). Moreover, how cheering the word, "And thou shalt sleep with thy fathers!" Not merely is the certainty of the thing here expressed, but the nature of it also! Death a mere sleep, into which the Lord's dear worn and weary ones shall fall with calmness, peacefulness, serenity, both indescribable and supernatural. Be assured, dear reader, if you have been made by the Holy Ghost to see and feel your own sinfulness, and if your heart and eye

Death only
a peaceful
sleeping.

are to Jesus, and Jesus only, you shall not only find Him all that you really need in life, but at its close shall realize

His divine companionship, feel His supporting power, and hear His fear-assuaging words. It must be so. It cannot by any possibility be otherwise, seeing He hath pledged Himself to fulfil all that He has promised.

How sweet, beloved, is that Scripture, "He shall enter into peace [margin, go in peace]: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness" (Isa. lvii. 2). Yes, most assuredly shall this be the case; and, notwithstanding previous fears and dark and gloomy apprehensions with respect to the article of so-called death, we repeat we are as sure as we are of our own existence, that when in very deed the time shall arrive for them to pass out of this world, the Lord's own dear children shall each and every one find that long-dreaded thing death is nothing more than a sweet falling asleep upon the

precious bosom of Jesus. Yea, such shall indeed find those precious words to be true :—

“Should death be at hand I’ll fear not undressing,
But cheerfully throw off these garments of clay;
To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to glory through death led the way.”

We repeat that, whatever at times may be our fleshly fears and creature-shrinkings upon this matter, yet we are sure, dear reader, that, when God’s time shall have really arrived for us to depart out of this world, there will be in death what there invariably was in life, strength equal to the day. We are convinced of it; we are most thoroughly at a point about it; and our grief, personally, is, that we should ever, even for a moment, call in question Divine faithfulness and Divine all-sufficiency. Personally, dear reader, we feel this, and deeply too, for this reason : simple and even ridiculous as it may appear, yet it is nevertheless true, that some three or four years ago we fell into such a state of doubt and perplexity, that we verily felt as though death itself could not divest us of the entire of that perplexity; it seemed as though we should of necessity carry a certain amount of care and anxiety with us even into eternity, to commingle with the bliss which we had a good hope awaited us there. We know to the casual reader the idea, upon the face of it, must appear most absurd. Notwithstanding, such was our state of mind; and how think you, dear reader, did the Lord show us its

Dying
strength in
the dying
hour.

fallacy? It pleased Him to lay us on a sick-bed. We verily believed our days were numbered. We never thought to have left our sick-chamber again. We believed from our inmost soul that the time of our departure had in very deed come. And what think you were our sensations? what our experience? Not the shadow of anxiety about wife or children—kindred or friends—congregation or readers. We

Experience felt we could leave all and every-
a test. thing with the Lord. We felt *we*
 were powerless, but *He* all-sufficient;

and, for the time being, we felt also that we could calmly lay our head upon His dear bosom, and quietly, peacefully, hopefully fall into our last long sleep.

Now, we say, with this plain and positive fact before us, so richly and blessedly illustrative of all the Lord's kind and gracious promises with respect to the closing up of the wilderness career and the passage of the Jordan, it does humble us, and that in the very dust, before Him, that we should ever call in question, or doubt even for a moment, His Divine faithfulness and all-sufficiency. And yet, alas! alas! we are prone so to do. When certain physical weakness or faintness or fluttering of heart comes upon us, Satan and unbelief are sure to take the advantage, and to insinuate as to how matters will fare with us in the swellings of Jordan.

But how warmed and how grateful was David's heart upon the ground of the Lord's assurance;

hence we read that he went in and "Sat before the Lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was *yet* a small thing in Thy sight, O Lord God; but Thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?"

(2 Sam. vii. 18, 19.) He felt, as it were, ^{The Psalmist's} overwhelmed with gratitude when He ^{grateful} reflected upon the Lord's goodness and ^{anticipation.} mercy, not merely as personally experienced by and for himself, but as so specially also promised for "his seed." "Thou hast spoken also of Thy servant's house for a great while to come." This appeared to him—and well it might—as so wonderful and so gracious. And does not the like feeling, dear reader, possess the mind of every godly parent? Oh, to think of his children and his children's children after him, being brought to know personally and savingly the self-same Lord; to be partakers of the self-same grace; to be guided by the self-same Hand; to be upheld by the self-same Almighty power; to be supplied out of the self-same fulness; and, finally, to be conducted to the self-same home, and eternally to be partakers of the self-same blissful and uninterrupted glory!

"Oh, for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break;
And all harmonious human tongues
The Saviour's praises speak."

Well might the Psalmist exclaim, in the closing

up of his adorations to the Lord God of Israel, "Therefore now let it please Thee to bless the house of Thy servant, that it may continue for ever before Thee: for Thou, O Lord God, hast spoken it: and with Thy blessing let the house of Thy servant be blessed for ever."

SADNESS AND SATISFACTION.

“Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow”
(2 SAM. xxiii. 5).

READER, we have, as above, another YET—and a glorious one, too—presented to us; but we would call your special attention to the solemn facts recorded in the interval between what occupied our thoughts in our last paper, and what is here stated. In that paper you will remember we contemplated Jehovah’s most gracious and condescending promise concerning both the Psalmist and his seed after him. David, as well he might, was overwhelmed with adoring wonder and gratitude as he reflected upon the Lord’s goodness and mercy towards him. But, to prove to us how little even the Lord’s most highly-favoured children are to be trusted, and how constantly they need either the thorn in the flesh, or the cross upon the shoulders, in order to keep them in their right place, namely, in a ceaseless looking to and depending upon the Lord, and the Lord alone, how soon does David, after the intimation just previously given, fall into the grossest of sins

The human
heart not
trustworthy.

and the most heinous and abominable of transgressions! Ah, reader, when we contemplate the distressing—yea, the humbling, agonizing—difference between the facts recorded in the 7th and the 11th chapters of the second book of Samuel, well may we fall before the Lord, and exclaim, “Do with me, Lord, as seemeth good in Thy sight. Lay upon me what trial or affliction Thou choosest, only preserve me, I entreat and implore of Thee, from sinning against Thee.” Reader, if David, the man after God’s own heart, could not do without pressure, what will you, or what can ourselves say? Ah, depend upon it, the smooth path—the plains of ease—would be most fatal to our dangerous. real peace and security. Well, therefore, may this fact reconcile us to the crook or the cross—to whatsoever or whensoever the Lord may be pleased to lay upon us. *He* knows what is best. “He does not afflict willingly, or grieve the children of men” (Lam. iii. 33). There is an absolute needs be for all He does. We shall see this more clearly and adoringly another day. Without doubt we shall then exclaim, trying and perplexing as our present position may be, “He hath done *all* things well;” “He led me forth by *the* right way, that I might come to this city of habitation” (Psalm cvii. 7).

“Bastards may escape the rod,
Sunk in fleshly, vain delight;
But the true-born child of God
Must not—would not—if he might.”

We must not, however, dwell at our usual length

upon this subject, as we have to consider other scriptures in which the wonderful "yet" appears.

"Although my house," says the Psalmist, "be not so with God." By this language we understand him to mean, that there were many things, both with respect to his own house and his kingdom in general, that gave him much anxiety—that caused him real, heartfelt—yea, the very keenest—anguish and sorrow. His agonizing feelings with respect to his rebellious Absalom were doubtless fresh upon his recollection. How touching the record in regard to him: "And the king was much moved, ^{David's bitter} and went up to the chamber over the ^{lamentation.} gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Sam. xviii. 33.) Apart from this, there were other painful experiences which were instrumentally to "bring his sin to remembrance," and only too forcibly to remind him of the Lord's declaration by the prophet Nathan, "Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from thy house" (2 Sam. xii. 10). And, whilst David felt how just the Lord was in His judgments, and how He chastised in fatherly love, wisdom, and discretion, he was enabled patiently and tranquilly to bow to His divine will and righteous indignation against sin and all ungodliness. Ah, reader, the Lord will never connive at or countenance sin in His people. He loves them too well, and hates sin too much, for this. Be assured, He will ever bear in mind and act up to the testimony, "If

His children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from Him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips" (Psalm lxxxix. 30—34).

Whilst, therefore; there was this surrender upon the part of David, and this entire falling into the hands of the Lord, there was, at the same time, the unspeakably blessed satisfaction arising from a thorough heartfelt conviction that "His times were in the Lord's hands" (Psalm xxxi. 15). He felt—and he rejoiced in the fact—that the Lord—and the Lord alone—had the appointment, the regulating,

the working out, of all and everything appertaining to him. He felt his own resignation. want of wisdom and foresight; he was

deeply sensible of his own utter weakness and inability to say or to do aught that would, in the leastwise, minister to his own good or God's glory; and hence, as a little child, he seeks to fall into the Lord's hand, precisely in the spirit which he manifested so soon afterwards, when, in respect to the numbering of the people, and the guilt and condemnation he entailed upon himself thereby, he exclaimed, "I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great; and let me not fall into the hand of man" (2 Sam. xxiv. 14). By the way, does not this very fact of what David

said in the 23rd, and what we read he did in the 24th chapter, go to prove what we just now stated about its not being safe to trust the Lord's people? They cannot bear unmingled prosperity; they must have weight, and care, and anxiety. Their comfort and their rejoicing cannot long be given without an admixture of the bitter with the sweet—the gall with the honey. The paschal lamb must be eaten with bitter herbs. They must, in various ways, be reminded that they are on pilgrimage, that they are still in an enemy's land.

But how sweet, withal, dear reader, to be able to adopt the poet's words—

“Boast not, ye sons of earth,
Nor look with scornful eyes;
Above *your* highest mirth
My saddest hours I prize;
For, though my cup seems filled with gall,
A something secret sweetens all.”

Ah, reader, do you know somewhat of that “something secret”? What a mercy, if you do! and what a mercy if you can personally add, with the Psalmist, “Yet He hath made with me—yes, with me, poor, vile, ill-and-hell-deserving sinner though I am—an everlasting covenant.” It was made from everlasting, and it is to abide through everlasting; and, as it is to reach from eternity past through all eternity to come, it must, of necessity, embrace the little space—the mere moment (by comparison) of the time-state. Moreover, it is a covenant—an engagement entered into by the eternal Three, Father, Son,

The secret of
the Lord.

and Holy Ghost, and signed and sealed in love and blood—ordered, devised, regulated, comprehending and embracing *all* things. What can be more definite? what more conclusive? what can have been overlooked, or not taken into the account? “A covenant ordered in *all* things.” Then, of necessity, it foresaw and provided against my every state and condition, in all the minute details of my every-day and all-the-day life; where I should be—what I should be—with whom I should meet—with what I should have to contend; all my cares, all my anxieties, all my perplexities; my every ache and pain; my personal trials, my relative trials, those appertaining to my body, those respecting my soul; my joys, my sorrows; my hopes, my fears; my songs, my sighs. Yes, each—all—everything, comprehended and embraced in this covenant. “A covenant ordered in *all* things.” And not only so, but “sure.” Sure of accomplishment; as “sure” and certain of being wrought out in all its rich, and full, and blessed details as God the Lord could make it. His wisdom, His love, His power, His oath engaged to fulfil and carry it out—

“’Twas made with Jesus for His bride
Before the sinner fell;
’Twas signed, and sealed, and ratified,
In all things ordered well.”

Then the Psalmist adds, “For this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow.” “*This is*” are in italics, and consequently

not in the original. Omitting the words which have thus been supplied, it would convey the idea—and a glorious and incontrovertible verity it is—that the covenant thus ordered in all things and sure was for the working out and the development of his salvation.

In one of our old Bibles the passage is thus rendered: "Even as the morning light when the sun riseth, the morning, I say, without clouds, so shall thine house be, and not as the grass of the earth is by the night rains [which groweth quickly and soon fadeth], for shall not mine house be with God? for He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, perfect in all parts, and sure; therefore all mine health and whole desire is, that He will not make it grow so" [but that my kingdom may continue for ever according to His promise].

The language, beloved, is clearly expressive of a time of wrestling, waiting, and watching upon the part of the Psalmist. There was much which he desired to see, but was not permitted to behold. Hence he was called to the exercise of faith and prayer, just as we read in the 11th of the Hebrews, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen ^{The trial and} them afar off, and were persuaded of ^{the triumph} of faith. ^{of faith.} them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." And this is, in reality, the safest and the sweetest position for a child of God here in this vale of tears. As we have seen, when we consider what

he is, as a poor fallen son of Adam, and where he is, "in the midst of so many and great dangers," it is for his good and for his Lord's glory that he should be kept in a simple dependent condition, with abundant cause and absolute necessity for self-distrust, creature-rejection, and a ceaseless and uninterrupted waiting at a throne of grace, and pleading the promises for the profit and well-being of his own soul, and the furtherance of Jehovah's kingdom and glory. And every trial, temptation, care, sorrow, perplexity, that is sanctified of the Holy Ghost, and thus operates upon the heart and mind of the subject of such trial or temptation, shall prove, in the sequel, to have been in very deed among "the all things that work together for good to them who love God, and who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. viii. 28).

"Good, when He gives, supremely good,
Nor less when He denies;
E'en crosses in His sovereign hands
Are blessings in disguise."

THE DIVINE APPEAL AND GRACIOUS ASSURANCE.

"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee" (ISA. xlix. 15).

WE learn from the chapter whence this passage is taken, that the question thus so mercifully and condescendingly proposed is in answer to Zion's exclamation, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." No greater wrong could have been done to the Lord than thus to charge Him with forgetfulness and unfaithfulness; and yet, reader, this, alas! is what we are Tears and
faithfulness. all prone to do whenever the Lord is pleased to try the faith He gives, and that for the express purpose of strengthening that faith, and glorifying Himself, the Author and Maintainer of it.

In marvellous condescension and boundless love and pity, the Lord is pleased to meet the objection; and He meets it, moreover, in such a way as is at once calculated to appeal to the inmost soul. He adopts an argument drawn from one of the most familiar facts of every-day life. "Can a woman," says the Lord Jehovah, "forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?"

The question has not reference simply to a child, but a *sucking* child; one whose very helplessness and ever-recurring necessities render it the more dependent upon the watchful eye and ever-constant regard of

the mother; and who, in turn, from the very mode by which she is enabled to nourish her offspring, is perpetually reminded of it and its wants. There is, with respect to both mother and

child, a striking reciprocity—the need of the one is met by the need of the other; the emptiness of the babe makes it a fit recipient for the overflowing fullness and superabundance of the mother. Not more pitiable would be the condition of the offspring unsupplied than that of the mother whose nourishment was not called for. The one would perish from *want*; the other from *superfluity*.

Oh, reader, how sweet if we are enabled to spiritualize this idea, and to contemplate the great fact that Jesus hath need of poor sinners, even as poor sinners have need of Jesus! Where was the proof of the efficacy of the blood,—where the evidence of the perfection and comeliness of the righteousness,—where the tokens of His inexhaustible fulness and preparedness to meet the exigencies of all comers, if there were no poor, guilty, naked, undone sinners such as we are? It is upon these grounds that there is such a beautiful and blessed adaptation between a mighty Saviour and otherwise helpless and utterly lost sinners.

Moreover, how striking is the figure the Lord has graciously employed for the setting forth of the

greatness and the ceaselessness of His love! Who but has observed and admired the keenness and the susceptibility and the devotion and the unwearied, inexhaustible nature of a mother's—and especially a nursing mother's—love? Let the babe and herself be separated for a little season, how does the heart of the one yearn after the other! If absent from home, she leaves her heart at home. If the babe be in one part of the house and the mother in another, the cry or the veriest movement of that babe is noted by the mother, where the attention of a stranger, or one less interested, has in no wise been drawn to it. Why this? Oh, it is the oneness of interest—the identity—the life! The very existence of the mother is, as it were, incorporated and absorbed in that of the child! Herself is forgotten in the child! She lives—she would die—for her child! Her child is her every-day and all-the-day theme! Her child is among her first thoughts and her last!

What a touching scene was presented in the papers a short time since! At the recent large and destructive fire at Constantinople, a mother rushed from the scene of the conflagration to a neighbour, exclaiming, “Oh, my child! my child! I’ve saved my child; the silver I’ve thrown down the well, but *that* can be picked up again;” when lo, in glancing at the bundle under her arm, which she thought contained her child, she discovered that it was it, and not the silver, she had, in her haste and dismay, thrown down

A mother's
unwearied
devotion.

The mother's
fatal mistake.

the well! The whole scene was changed in a moment! Her joy gave place to shrieks of horror and the most agonizing distress!

But, then, the Lord, in His kind and gracious argument, admits of the bare possibility of such forgetfulness. "Yea, they *may* forget." "It is," as if He would say, "just possible, although not at all likely." If the reader would have proof of the unlikelihood of such an occurrence, let him turn to the 3rd chapter of the 1st of Kings, where that wondrous scene is presented to us in reference to two degraded objects of our poor fallen humanity.

Solomon's wisdom. There is the wisdom exercised by Solomon for ascertaining which was the mother of the living, and which of the dead, child. We find the woman whose the living child was exclaiming to the king, "Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it." Ah, why was this? Because *she* was the mother, and because "her bowels yearned upon her son."

"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? yea, they may forget; yet—oh, that blessed yet—yet will I not forget thee." It implies that, near and dear as the child is to the mother, it is neither so near nor so dear as every child of God is to the Lord.

Further, it says, "Behold I have graven thee—
Graven upon the hands. mark the words, "graven," not simply written or inscribed, but "graven"—cut in, and that "upon the palms of my hands," the most delicate part of the hand, and

the most seen, and consequently the most remembered. Moreover, what is this or that object held by—the hook, or in the palm, of the hand? Folded up—clasped—held with tenacious grip, according to the value of the object and the power and ability of the holder. Has not many a drowning mother held her drowning child with a power almost supernatural? To unloose the grasp—to bend back the fingers—were almost an impossibility. It was the grip of death in order to retain in life!

“Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” Reader, what mother ever has done this? And the Lord adds, “Thy walls are continually before me,” setting forth the idea of an architect-builder regarding with special interest the progress of the walls of the building under course of erection. So the Lord looks with peculiar pleasure and delight upon the advance of the heavenly temple, as it rises stone after stone and course after course, until finally “He shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto us” (Zech. iv. 7). Respecting this great and glorious Zion, we read in ^{The Lord’s} the 102nd Psalm that even “the servants ^{loving interest} take pleasure in her stones, and in Zion. ^{in Zion.} Honour the *dust* thereof,” and in the 48th Psalm a blessed challenge is given, “Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this

God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death."

Reader, what can be more blessed? The Lord grant us yet more and more to realize our own personal interest in these unspeakably-precious verities!

MORE ROOM—MORE MERCY—MORE GRACE.

“And yet there is room” (LUKE xiv. 22).

THE “yet” before us, dear reader, is indeed encouraging. What can be more so when we think *who* were invited to the marriage-feast, and by *whom*? Moreover, what a striking contrast is presented with respect to those who were invited and did *not* come, and those who *did* come! The former were variously occupied, self-satisfied, and merely sought a continuance as they were and where they were. With the latter it was quite otherwise; destitution, degradation, disease, distress, depicted their condition. Hence to them such an invitation, from such a source and for such a purpose, was the more welcome. It was their very position enhanced the value and the appropriateness of so timely, so gracious, so condescending an invitation. Additional light is thrown upon this two-fold state of things to which we have thus briefly adverted, in the next chapter, depicting, as it does, the condition of the prodigal son both before and after the state of want to which he was reduced. How unlike his conduct and his language *previous* to the teaching connected with his wretchedness and misery with

The prodigal's
teachings.

both the one and the other *afterwards*; and yet how absolutely necessary was the ordeal through which he had passed, in order that he should be brought becomingly to feel his position and his privileges as a son, with all the associations and advantages of a home?

Ah, reader, know you not somewhat of the need of the self-same ordeal of teaching and training, in order that spiritually and savingly you might realize a measure of the mercy and the goodness and the love of Him respecting whom and whose will you had little or no concern before? Oh, it was the famine and the hunger attendant thereupon—it was the “having spent all and the beginning to be in want”—that instrumentally familiarized you with the touching saying, “And when he came to himself.” It was the fact of your having been necessitated from the force of circumstances to class yourself with the

Self- “poor, and the maimed, and the halt,
knowledge. and the blind,” that rendered the

Gospel invitation so welcome. Had you been allowed to continue in nature’s vainly-imagined self-sufficiency; had you still been permitted, in the carnal ignorance and pride of the human heart, to exclaim, “I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;” had it never been discovered to you by Him who “killeth, and maketh alive, who woundeth and His hands make whole,” the Gospel banquet, or Christ, as the bread and water of life, would have had no attractions for you. Hence how merciful the means (how-

ever painful and flesh-denying) that lead to such an end. Happy the circumstances (distressing as in themselves they may be) which lead to a personal knowledge and the pledged friendship of the ever-gracious Benefactor; sweet and salutary the affliction which hath enlisted the perpetual skill and tenderest sympathies of the great and good Physician; happy the sorrow, merciful the suffering, which draws forth the compassion and the succour of Him who loveth at all times, and who sticketh closer than a brother.

Reader, if you are under what we would call the preliminary teaching—that is, under trial which is intended to lead to a certain good and gracious end—we congratulate you even upon your present condition; for “He maketh sore” that He may “bind up,” “He woundeth” that “His hands may make whole.” Yea, more, ^{Killed in} “The Lord killeth and maketh alive; ^{order to make} ^{alive.} He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich; He bringeth low and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory” (1 Sam. ii. 6—8).

The words, “*And yet there is room,*” were brought to our mind, dear reader, in connection with certain labours of the past day. It has fallen to our lot on sundry occasions to take the chaplain’s duty at this or that gaol; and, painful as is the position, yet we have ever found it profitable. Just as we entered

the prison yesterday for the purpose of conducting the morning service, whilst the prisoners were passing separately up to the chapel—for the Prison service. whole routine of the establishment is conducted upon the silent system—we were asked, as we commented upon the musical powers of a former warder, “Have you ever heard the piece, ‘Too Late?’ If not, at the close of the service, you shall hear it.” The service for the morning being for the female prisoners, we chose John iv. for our subject, and sought to show the great condescension and tender compassion of Jesus in meeting with the woman of Samaria; that the “needs be” for His going through Samaria was that He had certain purposes of love and mercy treasured up in His heart towards her; that, although He knew she was a great sinner, He intended to pardon her sin. He brought it home to her heart and conscience with so much gentleness and compassion; He drew her into conversation; He even suffered Himself, in proof of His manhood, “to be wearied with His journey;” and, in His thirst, even asked for a draught of water at the hands of this poor woman, and that poor woman a great sinner! Moreover, in proof of His condescension, whilst He would not really tell the Jews who He was, nor even answer Pilate as to whether He was the Christ or not, in reply to the woman’s saying, “I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ; when He is come, He will tell us all things,” He said, “I that speak unto thee am *He*.”

How great proof was this of His condescension, as well as of His interest in the poorest and most sinful! Having endeavoured to press the matter home upon the poor prisoners, and to show that what the Lord was in the days of His flesh He is now—for He is “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever”—the service was concluded with the piece before referred to, “Too Late.” We could not distinguish the words, and hoped the prisoners could not either; for, as far as the subject was concerned, it clashed with that which had just engaged our attention—that “living water;” that forgetting everything but her sin, and He who had discovered it to her; that leaving her waterpot, and making her way into the city, and saying, “Come, see a man which told me all things ever I did: is not this the Christ?” and their after-declaration unto the woman, “Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.” Oh, no, no, this Gospel—these glad tidings—savour not of being “*Too late*,” but rather of the great and glorious fact, “*And yet there is room*,” in accordance with that sweet invitation,—

“Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched;
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity, join'd with power.
He is able, He is willing,
Doubt no more.”

Leaving the chapel, we went from cell to cell, conferring with prisoner after prisoner, up to fifty in

number. And oh, reader, what lessons of instruction were thus set before us! Men of all Prison scenes. ages, from sixty down to the mere youth of eleven or twelve; their terms of imprisonment ranging from a month to seven years! Others, again, awaiting their trial. How marked, moreover, the difference of the latter to those who had been tried and convicted; the one making the best of their fate; the other seeking to excuse or justify themselves, as if hoping it would weigh on their behalf when arraigned at the bar of justice. Ah! one saw what a mercy it was, in a spiritual sense, to have been charged as a transgressor, brought in guilty, and to have been led to see and acknowledge the justness of the charge and the condemnation. What a mercy for the mouth of self-justification to have been stopped! Reader, is this the case with *you*? Have *you* pleaded guilty? Have *you* nought to say why sentence should not be pronounced against you? Are *you* standing a poor self-condemned culprit at the bar of Divine justice, crying,—

“Mercy, O Lord, is my only plea,
Oh, let Thy mercy come!”

Oh, how great the mercy if such indeed be your condition!

Again, how great was the difference between the married and the single! How would the countenance change, the tears rush to the eyes, and roll down the cheek, when the wife and the children were named! Then, again, if the mother, especially if she were dead, were spoken of, how marked was the

effect! One case in this respect was particularly affecting. The youthful prisoner had run away during his apprenticeship, had gone to sea, and been wrecked. Returning home, his father had discarded him. The youthful runaway.

This drove him to theft, for which he was now a second time incarcerated. It might do such fathers good were they to read and carefully consider the story of the prodigal. How unlike the conduct of *his* father! There was one youth of about twelve, looking pale and haggard, whose term of imprisonment was just terminating, who shed the bitterest tears. There was another of about sixteen; he, for disobedience, was under extra punishment. There was a callousness and an obduracy about this prisoner that made us most apprehensive for his future. When, in answer to the inquiry as to the extent of their sentence, several said, "Seven years!" the countenances of each fell, and a species of despair betrayed itself. Still, whilst we thought of "seven years!" what may befall one in seven years? How many of us may be taken ere seven years shall have rolled away!—still, we say, we sought, even under these circumstances, to inspire hope. "Give yourself to reading; study the Bible; ask God to overrule even your present circumstances for good; you have now a season for reflection; your position might have been worse; had you not been stopped, you might have gone from bad to worse. Many have told me, in this very place, that they were thankful they were brought here. One has said so this very morning. More-

over, if your conduct be good, your term of imprisonment may be shortened." Oh, Prisoners' testimony. how the eye would glisten at that veriest intimation! But, reader, how general was the acknowledgment—in almost every case, moreover, most freely and frankly given—as the reason for being where they were! Drink, bad company, disregard of the Sabbath! Case after case, numbering fully four-fifths of the whole, was thus given.

We retired from that gaol with the heart oppressed and the mind charged to the utmost. We have been tempted sometimes, when thus engaged in this prison-work—but as yet have never been able to sum up courage for the occasion—to test somewhat of a prisoner's feelings in the following way. In order that we might know something of the tediousness and monotony of time, in a prisoner's estimation, we have been inclined to ask a turnkey to lock us into one of the cells for an hour, without watch to know the time, or book or aught else to occupy us. We much question if that hour would not appear to be three at least! What, then, must days and nights, weeks, and months, and even years, be?

As we think of the merciful contrast between ourselves and these our poor fallen fellow-creatures, we can only exclaim:

"Oh, to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrain'd to be;
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my wand'ring heart to Thee!"

In the afterpart of the day, we met a dear tried servant of the Lord, whose position is one of great weight and responsibility. His mind, he said, had been recently very greatly exercised by a case which had of late come under his notice. We dare not enter into particulars; but, with the hope of its awakening a prayerful solicitude in the hearts of our readers, we will just state, that the rescue of the person in question from the perilous position into which he had been permitted to plunge himself, was more than marvellous—it was miraculous! It was the astounding interposition of the outstretched hand of an omniscient Almighty Jehovah.

Readers, during a most restless night—in the waking hours of that night—our heart has gone up to the Lord on behalf of this personally altogether unknown one. It is a case—one of the most touching—we have ever known or heard of. He fails to see—much less to acknowledge—the most merciful hand of God in regard to his rescue. He is sceptical—yea, apparently quite infidel—in so-called principle; and yet marvellous—most marvellous—the most, we repeat, we have ever heard of—has been his deliverance! Is there nothing in this? No object? no purpose? no mercy? These words have come to us in our midnight wrestlings: “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” (Zech. iii. 2.)

Is there
mercy in
store?

It would appear as though there were a something upon his mind the which he feels he cannot out-

live—some tremendous mental pressure. Now, oh that it would please the Lord, if it be His gracious sovereign will, just to show him that it is not only by a Divine power he has been sustained, but by a Divine hand he has been rescued! Oh, that it would please the Lord to do towards him all that was done with respect to Joshua the high priest, in the chapter from which we have just quoted! Would that it might please the Lord to deal towards this poor Satan-possessed one, just as He did with Saul of Tarsus, when, on his murderous errand to Damascus, He said, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (Acts ix. 4); or with the poor devil-haunted one by the Sea of Gadara, who, notwithstanding the fact that “no man could bind him,

no, not with chains, because that he
 The mad had often been bound with fetters and
 Gadarene. chains, and the chains had been plucked

asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces; neither could any man tame him;” yet it was only for JESUS—the despised Nazarene—to say “Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit,” and the immediate and blessed effect was that he was found at the feet of Jesus, “sitting and clothed, and in his right mind:” ay, and as an undoubted proof of the reality of the mighty change that had passed upon him, he desired, in the gratitude of his heart and in the sweet glow of love for His person, that “he might be with Him” (see Mark v. 1—20).

Ah, dear reader, what cannot JESUS do? "Is there anything too hard for the Lord?" Some of us who have been, as it were, down to the very antechambers of hell, and rescued therefrom, are bound to testify to this blessed fact, that "all things are possible with GOD!" Some of us who, by grace and power divine, have been snatched from the very jaws of destruction, when we have concluded our doom were as really fixed and sealed, as though we were already in the bottomless pit, cannot, dare not say, much less sing, "*Too late! too late!*" No, but we will take up—and that hopefully and prayerfully, too—the precious language that has so forced itself upon the heart in reference to this very case, "*And yet there is room.*" We know not how it is, but so it is, that this case—although, as we have said, personally perfectly unknown to us—yet it is so deeply and powerfully laid upon our heart. Oh, that it may be of God! Oh, that He may prove it to be so! What we now write may not—we know not that it is at all likely it ever will—come into the hands of the party in question. Yet we feel thus prompted to write, and, moreover, again to ask our readers to seek to bear this case upon their hearts before the Lord. Ah, one whisper from Him—
The power of
Jesus.
one touch, as it were, of His finger—the "Why persecutest thou me?" would suffice to banish Satan—to silence every specious argument—and to possess the mind, even of this sceptic, with the sweetness, the teachable-

ness, and the power of a new-born babe in Christ Jesus.

Ah, ye poor carping ones, if we should happen to address such, if there be no reality in Divine revelation—no truth in vital godliness—no supernatural influence or power working in the hearts of men—how

comes it to pass that one poor creature
 Whence should feel as we do at this moment
 special for another poor fallen fellow-creature?
 sympathy?

We declare before the great Searcher of hearts, that one of the most joyous pieces of intelligence that could possibly reach our ears and touch our heart would be tidings that this poor Satan-deluded one, of whom we have spoken, had been brought, by the precious power of the Holy Ghost, a poor sin-convinced, ardent suppliant at the footstool of Divine mercy. Yea, it would give us inexpressible joy and unbounded satisfaction to hear the Lord had said with regard to him, "Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom:" and, at the same time, given him a blessed participation in that Divine assurance, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. viii. 28). So that all that this poor desperate or distracted or despairing one has ever gone through, or is now encountering, is only a means or instrumentality by which his heart shall thus be brought to surrender to Him who is worthy of our most entire obedience, homage, and love; and who, in answer to the saying, "Lord, it is done as Thou hast com-

manded, and *yet there is room*," commissions His servants to "go out into the highways and hedges, and *compel* them to come in, that His house may be filled."

We ask again, if there be no truth in Christianity, naught that is supernatural and altogether distinct from merely human feeling or natural sympathy, whence, for example, our interest in this personally unknown one? Why have we touched a chord in many a reader's heart, which we doubt not by our brief reference to this case, we have done, that shall lead such reader for the time being to forget his own case, and to forego his own claims, in an intense anxiety and a holy wrestling at the mercy-seat on behalf of this unknown one? Is this natural? Can it be accounted for upon merely human grounds? Can simple morality, kindly feeling, or your boasted philosophy, produce this? We say, firmly and unhesitatingly, No. It is a supernatural power. It is that which is begotten by the Holy Ghost in the hearts of the Lord's Spirit-quickenened ones, and is in measure and degree akin to the feelings which possessed Moses when he said, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written" (Exod. xxxii. 31, 32). Ah, what mere human love or natural sympathy can come up to this standard, or that which prompted the Apostle Paul to exclaim, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not,

my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh?"

JEHOVAH-JESUS TRIUMPHANT.

“ Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion ”
(PSALM ii. 6).

WHAT a glorious consideration is this, beloved ! Amid all the dying circumstances of this poor perishing world, and the startling events that are now shaking empires to their very foundation, how cheering is the reflection, that there is a kingdom which can never be moved, and a King who will eternally and uninterruptedly reign ! Nothing can disprove this great and glorious fact. Perplexing and bewildering as is the external working and general appearance of events, yet naught has arisen, nor can arise, to interfere with, much less to frustrate, the divine purposes of Him who “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will ” (Eph. i. 11). Blessed be His great and adorable name, “He doth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth ; and none dare stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou ? ” (Dan. iv. 35). “The Lord sitteth upon the flood ; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever ” (Psalm xxix. 10). And the real—and only happy—position of a child of God, under the present aspect of things, is, to seek and to realize grace from on high, in order to “be still

and know that He is God;" for "He will be exalted among the heathen; He will be exalted in the earth" (Psalm xli. 10). The mercy is to rest in Him, and to rejoice in the fact, that, however subtle the enemy, or whatever the artifices of men as

prompted by the wicked one, nothing
 Rest in the Lord. can by any means interfere with, or
 even in the leastwise retard, the course

which Jehovah, from all eternity, designed to pursue. The powers of darkness, as well as all the combined efforts of man, can but be subservient to the wise and unerring will and pleasure of Him who is "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working" (Isa. xxviii. 29).

What precious appeals are those, beloved reader, contained in the 40th of Isaiah: "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and

who instructed Him, and taught Him
 The majesty of Jehovah. in the path of judgment, and taught
 Him knowledge, and showed to Him

the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto Him? The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth

it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved. Have ye not known? Have ye not heard? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: that bringeth the princes to nothing; He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and He shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth" (Isa. xl. 13—26).

The arguments, dear reader, are so blessed, and so exactly adapted to the times in which we live, and the circumstances in which our lot is cast, that we could not refrain from quoting the foregoing verses; and then how sweetly are they followed up both by an appeal to the Lord's dear exercised children, and the most blessed and unquestionable assurance that

they shall be strengthened, sustained, and delivered.
Oh, how true it is, believer, that God—even our own—

“God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

“Deep in unfathomable mines
Of *never-failing* skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sov'reign will.

“Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.”

The words of our text, beloved, are, you will perceive, introduced by another of the significant “*YERS*” which have of late engaged our attention. Is it not particularly worthy of note that this declaration of

The basis of Christ's kingdom. the setting up a precious and glorious Christ as King stands, so to speak, upon the very threshold of the blessed book of Psalms? Moreover, the declaration

is based upon the opposition and the enmity both to Him and His reign. Now this is a most cheering consideration to the Lord's dear family, because it fortifies them with a scriptural argument with which to repel the taunts and insinuations of the carnal as to the character of Him who is emphatically declared to be the Prince of Peace, and as to the nature of His reign and dominion. The kingdom of Christ is set up upon the ruins of the fall. He is to be eternally glorified as a conqueror. His kingdom is to be established upon the footing that He

has fought and triumphed over Satan, sin, death, hell, and the grave! This should ever be borne in mind; and, in proportion as this great truth is kept in view, will light be thrown upon the conflict in which every true follower of Christ is engaged. The true Christian is, in his little measure and degree, to follow in the divine footsteps of his Lord and Master. Hence, as He encountered opposition, as He had to wage a deadly and a perpetual warfare with the powers of darkness, so, in their little day and generation, have all His followers. He declared, when on earth, that "the disciple should not be above his master, nor the servant above his lord" (Matt. x. 24).

There are, moreover, two great and gracious features which are inseparable from this very position: first, the unspeakably precious promises of their glorious Head and Lord, which are directed specially and particularly to this condition; and, secondly, the sweet and altogether divine and supernatural personal realizations which are inseparably connected therewith. The apostles when "beaten and commanded (by the council) that they should not speak in the name of Jesus," were only the first of that "great cloud of witnesses" who "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts v. 41).

Dear reader, cannot you testify before a gain-saying world, that some of the happiest moments you ever passed on earth were when you were re-

proached for the name of Jesus? Oh, when was it that you had special communion with your Lord? when had you "fellowship with Him in His sufferings?" Was it not when "men reviled you and persecuted you, and said all manner of evil against you falsely?" (Matt. v. 11.) Ah, was it not then

you were led to think upon Him who
 Sympathy with "endured such contradiction of sinners
 a suffering against Himself" (Heb. xii. 3); "who,
 Lord.

when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously?" (1 Pet. ii. 23.) When, we ask, could you enter so feelingly and so sympathizingly into all that was foreshown by the prophet Isaiah of the contempt and the buffetings and the cruel and ignominious death of your Lord and Saviour, as when you yourself, in your own tiny measure and degree, were called to bear reproach and to suffer wrongfully? Did you ever feel the words of Jesus, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," as then? And were you ever, under other circumstances, so disposed to sympathize with the dying thief, as when, addressing his brother malefactor, upon their condemnation, he exclaimed, "And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss"? (Luke xxiii. 41.)

We trust these few observations may serve, under God, to make the reader more patient and tranquil under suffering for his Lord's sake.

How sweet, then, beloved, is the consideration, that, in spite of all opposition, and in the exercise of the grace, the love, the tender compassion of His heart, God the Father hath set up as King in Zion our most glorious Christ! What proof is given thereby of even the Father's love to, and interest in, poor sinners! How does Jesus Himself dwell upon the Father's love, when He specially addresses Him in the 17th of John; and how do both the apostles Paul and Peter, in their several epistles, testify to the self-same fact! It is very blessed, dear reader, to remember this, and to contemplate likewise the revelation and discovery of the fact under the personal ministry and divine power of the Holy Ghost. It is He—and He alone—that leads His children into all truth upon these great and glorious verities. "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." As much as to say, "Be the hatred or the hostility or the antagonism what it may, yet I—the immutable, the self-existent, the eternal I AM THAT I AM—have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. He shall reign; He shall have dominion from sea to sea;" yea, with regard to His mediatorial kingdom and possession, God the Father says, "Ask of me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Psalm ii. 8). How precious, reader, is the contemplation of this blessed covenant declaration of God our Father; and, inasmuch as He hath said it, so it must be. Verily it shall come to pass. Not-

Christ's
appeal to His
Father.

withstanding all the contentions of the powers of darkness, the word of Jehovah shall come to pass. "His counsel must stand, and He will do all His pleasure" (Isa. xlii. 10). Verily, there must be a fulfilment of the words of Jesus, in sweet response to this glorious declaration of the Father: "Father,

I will that they also, whom Thou hast
 The will and given me, be with me where I am;
 pleasure of that they may behold my glory,
 Jesus. which Thou hast given me: for
 Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the
 world" (John xvii. 24). "And this is the
 Father's will which hath sent me, that of all
 which He hath given me I should lose nothing,
 but should raise it up again at the last day"
 (John vi. 39).

Now, dear reader, as before intimated, if the Lord the Spirit is pleased to fix these glorious verities in our hearts, it will not only lift us above all personal sorrows, worldly difficulties, Satan's fiery temptations, but likewise render us placid and hopeful—yea, possess us with a holy confidence—in the midst of all that is taking place around. Again, moreover,

as the Lord the Spirit is pleased to
 Jehovah's give us faith, we shall stand still, in a
 purposes not to calm and peaceful conviction, that the
 be frustrated.

Lord Jehovah is working out, in His
 own wise, wonderful, and irresistible way, His
 own eternal purposes of love and mercy to His
 eternally chosen and everlastingly loved people,
 and wrath and indignation against every final

opposer of His Son, and that kingdom which He has designed and declared shall be eternally set up.

Oh, then, for faith to wait and patience to watch His hand, assured that every day, and every circumstance connected with such every day, is only hastening the coming and the everlasting reign and triumph of Him concerning whom the Father hath said, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion."

We cannot close without expressing our belief, that the events which are so rapidly occurring in our own times are leading us onward and onward to some great crisis. What that may be we attempt not to define; but of this we are persuaded, beyond all doubt or hesitation, that it shall ultimately issue in the return and the everlasting triumph of Him respecting whom Jehovah hath said, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is" (Ezek. xxi. 27).

Reader, we would close with the exhortation of our dear Lord and Master, and may He vouchsafe to each of us grace to attend thereunto:

"Take ye heed, watch and pray: for **The need of**
ye know not when the time is. For **watchfulness.**
the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey,
who left his house, and gave authority to his ser-
vants, and to every man his work, and commanded
the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye
know not when the master of the house cometh, at

even, or at midnight, or at the cockerowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch " (Mark xiii. 33—37).

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